THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

MAY 40¢

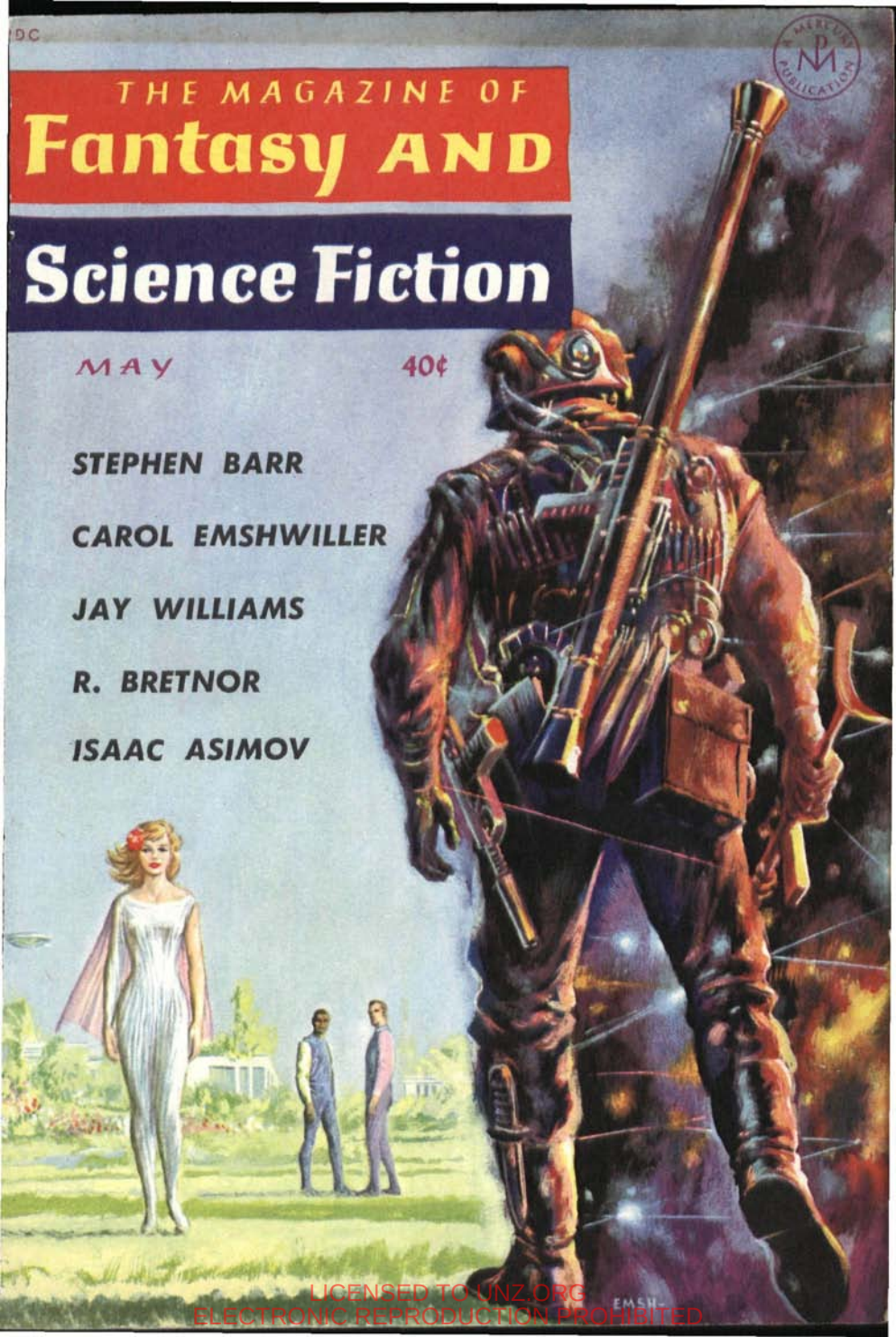
STEPHEN BARR

CAROL EMSHWILLER

JAY WILLIAMS

R. BRETNOR

ISAAC ASIMOV



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The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction

MAY *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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Carol Emshwiller has employed violence in her stories, and strange colors and unusual backgrounds; but perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of her work is a kind of quiet believability imposed on, or created out of, something unfamiliar. As in . . .

ADAPTED

by Carol Emshwiller

DID YOU SEE MY SIGNAL IN THE window, my cornstalks? I wrapped the bottoms of them in brown paper because I don't have the right sort of vase anymore. All mine are too blue or too green or white.

You know, once I wanted to put the whole back yard into corn and I said I would bring the stalks in to put in the vases, for why in the world, I said then, are cornstalks less beautiful than flowers? They are green thick and a big bunch of them in a house would have a wildish look of abundance and when they dried and turned tan they would be like sand, like some of the desert brought inside. Who made all these silly rules about beauty? I said once.

But I was too busy that year to dig up the backyard grass, except for a little patch like most everyone had, for lettuce and tomatoes. You were one that summer and I was chasing after you. You were always bringing the inside out and the outside in and, even if I felt you were right to do so, I swept out the sand every night and brought the toys inside again. Sometimes I found my spoons in the sand pile and now and then something from my underwear drawer. Once I found a vase from the top shelf over the refrigerator. There was nothing that was out of your reach. You climbed like a monkey though you could hardly walk.

I think not planting that corn was a big mistake, then, when we had our first house. I should have done it, time or no time. I should have not swept out sand a few nights and dug up that tough grass

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instead, because the real reason I didn't do it wasn't because of the time at all, but because I thought it would look peculiar to have the whole back yard in corn. I thought the neighbors might not like it. I thought they might think I was strange.

Well, I *was* strange then, but strangeness is not so easy to keep. I shut my eyes and opened my hands as wide as I could and, though it seemed to cling, little by little, year by year, it fell away.

There was a time, when I was your age, when I liked being different. I used to like to look into a mirror and I even did not mind my long, thin nose and sharp chin. I would wonder about myself, staring into my own eyes, and every time I did it I would feel a kind of excitement. I could see how different I was, and I could see a look about me (it seemed to come more and more as I grew older) of something going to happen. I didn't know at all what it could be but sometimes I would think of it as flying. I could fly if I wanted to, I'd think, only what I meant was . . . well, not flying at all but something I could do that had to do with this floating feeling inside me. I knew of children who had jumped from trees thinking that they could fly, but I never tried that. Though I would say to myself, and be sure of it, I can fly, that was not what I meant.

I was rather proud of my looks then, though I wouldn't stand up straight and look at people. "The spittin' image of your father," my mother used to say, always with a kind of fear in her voice and a kind of anger. My father had not been seen or heard from since two months after she met him. "Two months and eleven days of bliss," she would say fiercely and that was all she ever did say about him.

I think I first learned from her to hunch my shoulders and hang my head, though that got worse later. Mother was more embarrassed by my height and my nose than she was of my slumping, so she never told me to stand up straight.

And then, when I was nineteen, your father came, blond and perfect and brown that summer, the crisp, yellow hairs on his chest and down his legs, making him a man edged in gold, in the sun on the beach. I couldn't believe he'd look at me at all, though big eyes were in the fashion then. I slumped, I wilted, and I hung my head. "You have the most perfect eyes I've ever seen," he'd say, but I got so I hated to look at myself in the mirror. I always wore low heels then, for even though your father was tall, I was taller. And the day before he asked me to marry him I dyed my hair so it was jet black and not a kind of greyish half-black. I always felt it helped

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and I've kept it this way ever since. You've never seen me with my real hair color. It's like yours.

So we got married and you came along and your father was not like my father. Handsome as he was, certainly handsomer than *my* father, he stuck to me and to his job managing the little grocery store, and soon we got that first house, and that was my chance, really, to be myself for the first time. I was free of my mother and free, by then, from your father in a certain, different way. I could have planted the backyard all in corn. I don't think your father would have cared so much, but I planted tomatoes and lettuce and then rose bushes and zinnias. In the windows I hung green curtains with a white and pink pattern. I remember just once I said that I rather felt like having a bright red ceiling. "At least in one room," I said. And your father said, "And why not paint the floor black and paste silver stars on it," and he laughed, so I did the ceilings cream downstairs and light green upstairs. It almost seemed I purposely did them the colors I disliked the most. But after a while I didn't mind them and the ache I had to have just one red ceiling went away.

Things went along as in any family then, and you grew bigger and went to school and didn't take so much time and I decided to take things up like the other young mothers did and a strange thing happened.

I had decided to try some art and I enrolled in a beginning class in an adult education art course. After the class had gotten into it a bit, the teacher would take us outside in fair weather to do landscapes.

One time we were sitting on a small hill doing a group of young, rather uninteresting willow trees along a new artificial pool. It was hot and there were quite a few ants about, crawling over our legs and getting in the watercolor boxes. The others were restless, talking and getting up to shake off an ant or two and after a while most of them walked across the park to a little drug store to get iced tea.

They asked me to go with them, but I was already started on my picture and I said, no, rather rudely, I think, though I usually take great pains to be sweet to people. You know how I am. I think ever since I realized I was different I've tried hard to be sweet to others. Well, this time I know I was rude, but this time I didn't care. I had begun to like the stiff, new-looking scene. I had begun to see it in a different way. It was as if it were all moved much closer and I was looking at tiny details and this was an open spot in a forest instead of an open spot in a suburban housing development. I felt thick trees all about in the place of the low, long stores of the

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corner shopping-center and the split-level houses behind them. This was an oasis of sunlight in a jungle instead of an oasis of shade, and I began to paint it like that, not thinking what colors were right or that the detailed lines I made with my blue-inked ball point pen of the veins in the leaves and the texture of the bark and the bugs could only be made up because I certainly couldn't see them. I felt as if I could.

The others came back, but I had set up my things to the side and no one came to see what I had done. I didn't wake up to it myself until I had finished. I knew it was finished without even taking a last, long look and I turned to wash my brushes and shut up my box. I was thinking of getting an iced tea for myself before we left though I didn't care for iced tea and I really wasn't feeling so very hot. Heat has never bothered me, you know, but of course you do know, for it has never bothered you either.

And then I turned to get my purse and I caught sight of the painting out of the corner of my eye and I looked at it straight on then, really looked, for the first time, and I felt a jolt as if everything inside me had suddenly stood up while I was still sitting there. I've only felt that way one other time in my life and that was yesterday.

The picture was a tangle of blue pen lines and then browns and reds and dots of yellow. It was still a picture of those five young willows and the stiff lawn sloping to the pool, but one sensed the dark jungle close around it. It seemed a scene of mathematical orderliness and lemon-cool sunlight in the midst of hot chaos. In the corner of the foreground there was the branch of a pinish tree. The only part of the picture that was green, almost black. It was done in great detail, even the shapes of the needles drawn with those spider-webbing blue lines, but I had never seen a tree or needles quite like that ever before.

I quickly hid the painting under some sheets of fresh paper and when the teacher asked to see it, I said I hadn't been able to do anything that day because it was too hot and because of the ants. When I got home I tore up the painting and put it in the garbage and I didn't take any more art classes. I even didn't take music, though that was what I would have liked to try next.

I tried some history courses at the college then, and later Psychology, but after that art class it seemed I couldn't get interested. I wasn't learning anything that I really cared about at all, and I kept having the feeling that everything I was learning and memorizing so carefully was only partly true. Then I decided to go on a

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reading program. I joined two book clubs and I read all the best-sellers, but there wasn't a single book that I could say I enjoyed except one silly little book, not very well written, about a girl named Sarania who thought she could fly, but in the end she found she couldn't at all.

And then, but I'm sure you remember, I decided to go for swimming lessons. How I loved that. I got caught up in it without even thinking and I'd come home late and we'd have spam or a can of hash for supper. I hardly noticed what I was doing. There was that feeling in me again of something going to happen. I felt like a caterpillar would feel if he could think about butterflies.

It was when the pool was cold that I loved it best. I would imagine I was diving into a deep, black, mountain lake and I would swim and swim while the others would shiver. "How can you do that?" they'd say, and "It's always the thin ones that are tough."

I took you sometimes on Saturdays. You were ten then. I guess those were the last times we felt close to each other. You learned so fast everyone was amazed. You were like a little seal with just your nose out of water and your black eyes bright and your long, dusty-colored hair dark with water and plastered close to your head. We would swim together to the bottom of the deepest end and blow bubbles at each other and then come up and laugh. You, with your sharp little nose and long, thin hands and feet, you were beautiful to me then. And, because I looked like you, I almost thought I was beautiful too.

But after a while your father complained about the meals and the dust about the house. "Now and then I wouldn't mind," he said, "but it's been everyday for over a month." And I began to think again and I began to have the same feeling I had when I painted that strange picture and I realized my feelings about swimming were the same but had come on me slowly so that I hadn't noticed them.

I stopped swimming then and I wouldn't let you go either. You never would look at me after that, straight into my eyes like we used to when our heads would pop up out of the water and we'd take a big breath and laugh. You've always held your eyes away since then, and you took on my slouching walk, my hanging head, and I, I never told you to stand up straight.

It was after the swimming I began to do nothing. "I guess I'm just a housewife," I'd tell my friends and laugh and I did try to keep a nice house. I always have, tried, but it was even harder to do the housework when I had no classes to think about, even ones I didn't particularly like, and not

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much to do with you. About all I did for you in those days was to chauffeur you to your piano lessons and back. How you hated the piano, as much as or more than I did when I was your age. Remember how you begged to play the oboe at school? And your father said, "Why not, even if it is peculiar for a girl. After all, someone in the band has to play it." But I said no, and your father was used to me then and didn't bother to ask why. He knew I wouldn't be able to give a good reason but would only get upset and talk nonsense.

You didn't know, but every morning, first thing in those days, I'd take three aspirin. That was before Dr. Wilton got me the tranquilizers. Somehow I would get through each day, portion it out in cigarettes and coffee and aspirin.

Then I got what I felt was a wonderful idea. I would have my face changed. That, I thought, would put an end to my strange thoughts of being different, those crazy night-time ideas that I could fly or do something equivalent to that. If my face was like other peoples', then, I felt, I would have a new beginning and really *be* like other people instead of pretending. I could relax then and just be my new self.

So then I got that job in the department store because I couldn't ask your father for all that money. I was quite happy—not with the job, but just sure that I was going in the right direction and that things would soon be better.

I worked almost that whole year and then (you were thirteen and it was spring) I went to New York for three weeks and had my nose changed and a little taken off my chin. I had them widen my nostrils so no one could say they were either wide or thin and some taken off the end of my nose so that no one could say it was either long or short.

When I came back, it was the first of May, you gave no sign that I was changed. You never spoke of it and you never looked at me.

But your father loved my new nose. He said it was the most perfect nose he'd ever seen. He said it matched my eyes now and that he couldn't stop looking at me with my perfect nose and perfect eyes. And I could see that, for he was always looking and pulling me to him. "It's like having a new wife," he said, "A brand new, beautiful wife."

It was like the honeymoon again for a few weeks, but I remember that first night after I came home I got out of bed alone around midnight and went to look at the moon and there was a dog barking in the park and our young fruit trees, just in blossom, looked frail and silly to me because I was thinking of the forest, and I forgot, looking out at the night like that, that I was only tall like my father now. I forgot I no longer had his

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face and I felt again that peculiar thing about me. I could fly if I wanted to, I thought. I could fly. Yet I didn't really want to, and never *had* wanted to except sometimes at night like this. And just as I was thinking it, then, I remembered my new nose and chin and I stopped looking out of the window and curled up on the floor and cried for a long time. I've never cried again, not even yesterday.

It was soon after that Dr. Wilton got me tranquilizers. I had quit my job. I did not enjoy it for its own sake and extra money meant nothing to me, so, about three weeks after I had my face changed, I went to see Dr. Wilton and he said I was fine and got me the tranquilizers.

And then I sort of discovered nuts. Of course I'd had nuts before, and always liked them, but now they became my passion like candy is to some people or alcohol to others. I could not be without a box of mixed nuts near me and I ate as I worked and I grew into this thing I am, this giant, tall *and* fat, my perfect nose looking small and my carefully carved chin hardly there at all. And my real self, tall and very thin and long nosed and with mud-grey hair, my real self seemed like a dead twin sister. One who had some great talent that was never realized. I took a tranquilizer every morning and every afternoon and I laughed over bridge with neighbors and I said, "I guess I'm just the house wife type," but I don't think I will ever say that anymore.

You see, yesterday I saw a man and seeing him was like everything sitting up inside me just like that time when I painted that picture. It was like love, too, love at first sight, only it wasn't exactly love.

He was very, very tall, and thin as you are, he had a long nose and sharp chin and his hair was the color of soft, dry dirt . . . like yours.

I held the grocery bundle and leaned back against the car. All the years seemed to fall away and I was back before I met your father, and wonderful things were going to happen, things I could see when I looked in the mirror, and this was it. This was the time.

He was standing on our walk and he seemed to be looking about the house for some sign, looking at each window as if to find a room inside with a bright red ceiling, or cornstalks in brown pots showing at the windows, or perhaps a yellow pane of glass in one. And he looked at the lawn as if searching for the little round suns of the dandelions, but I had pulled them all out. He looked up and down the street then, as if for some other house that might have some sign, and he took a paper out of his pocket and looked from it back to our house, and then he turned to go.

I took a grip on my grocery bag and started towards him, my legs

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like willow branches, and I walked right to him looking into his eyes. I asked with my eyes, I begged, but I could not bring myself to speak. I kept thinking, in a minute he'll know me, in one moment more. *We*, I thought. I can say *We*. I'm his kind. But I walked up to him and past him and he didn't recognize me. Dressed in my fat and my dyed hair and my new face I passed him. He looked right at me, my whole surface, and didn't recognize me at all.

Going up the steps I saw him walking away, on down the street, watching houses. "Father," I whispered, though he was younger than I (more your age) and seemed also husband, brother, son. I went into the house and sat a long time in the hall and I could not cry. Then your father came in, and you later, and I made supper and we ate and afterwards you studied and practiced the piano and your father read and we heard the news on the radio and we went to bed and then got up again in the morning and ate breakfast as we have done and done and done. But I did get cornstalks and put them in the window. I don't know anymore if it's the right sort of sign. I have tried to think in other ways so long that my mind no longer flies away of itself.

But it's for you, and you'll know what to do. I knew better at your age than ever again. And he, or someone like him (our kind), will come back, sometime for sure. And when he comes, or someone like him, I want you to go with him and I'll stay. I'll stay with your father and be what I've made myself into. But you, Darling, sit up. Don't slump so any more.

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"Underpaid professor" is, of course, a pleonasm. The interesting point about the Ryland University staff was that it was given a unique opportunity to improve notably its financial situation by the employment of its collective educated brainpower. . . .

THE TEETH OF DESPAIR

by Avram Davidson and Sidney Klein

THE FULL IMPORT OF THE SINgular series of events involving the groves of Acadame with the jungles of television, and culminating, perhaps significantly, on a certain April Fool's Day not so very long ago, has remained until now unknown to the American public. From a nation which went into something resembling a state of shock following the disclosure of corruption, nepotism, and anarcho-syndicalist infiltrations into one of its most cherished institutions, much, of necessity, had to be concealed.

It is only now that we are able to disclose this piece of history which, unknown to the protagonists themselves at the time, was eventually to result in the application to transtellurian satellite communications of that revolutionary principle whose name is now known to all the world. But at the beginning . . .

It was on a Sunday night in late February. The family of Dr. Thomas Grew, Professor of Physics at Ryland University, had some hours ago finished a supper consisting of the remains of the previous day's hamburger, hashed with potatoes. The meal had been eaten thoroughly, if not enthusiastically. After doing the dishes, Mrs. Grew and her elder daughter, Juanita, went out baby-sitting—not together—as they did several evenings a week. By this means they contrived to earn enough to buy Juanita's clothes. What Juanita discarded her mother wore, and after that they were cut down and passed into a second avatar for the use of Isabel, the younger Grew daughter. Isabel, an ungainly

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child with acne, ill-adjusted to her peer-group, objected stridently to this arrangement, which was the best that could be managed on her father's salary.

For some weeks, fortunately, Isabel had contented herself with being merely sullen, and at eight o'clock that evening she joined her brother Dudley, the Grew's only son, in fitting bobby-pins onto fan-shaped cards—an arrangement, in violation of child-labor laws, connived at by a Mr. Calman, a drugs-and-sundries wholesaler in a small way of business, whose establishment was located on the ground floor of the run-down apartment house in which the Grews lived. Kindly Mr. Calman paid seventy-five cents per hundred cards, and supplied all materials. The children were allowed by their parents to keep the money in lieu of allowance.

Dr. Grew had recently been replaced in his part-time job as busboy in a chow-mein restaurant, owing to the arrival from Hong Kong (on a fraudulently obtained passport) of the proprietor's third cousin, a former Lt. Colonel in the Nationalist Army who had been living very quietly since the fall of Canton. As he had not yet been able to secure other employ, and as he had marked all his class papers that morning during the hour or so respite afforded by the attendance of his children at an Ethical Society Sunday school, Dr. Thomas Grew found himself momentarily with some spare time. He employed it in tinkering with a piece of electronic equipment he had pieced together for his amusement over a period of years by smuggling out a resistor here, a capacitor there, from the University lab. The fingers of his children dipped mechanically into the box of bobby pins. Their eyes were fixed immovably to the screen of the television set.

The presence of a television was absolutely against every principle which Dr. Grew held culturally dear, and its cost was astronomically beyond his own means. But it had been presented to them, second-hand, with much flourish, by the wealthy widow of a master plumber, a friend of his mother-in-law's. Dr. Grew did not wish to offend this woman, a Mrs. Novack, because she turned over to him the boxes of cigars which still came her way as gifts from various plumbing equipment manufacturers (she retained an interest in the business); and these cigars he traded off to Mr. Calman for a cheaper brand at the rate of one for one-and-a-half, shredding them and smoking them in his pipe. He had been unable to afford pipe tobacco proper since his marriage, which had occurred during the latter part of the vice-presidency of John Nance Garner.

First the children spent half an hour in flaccid delight watching a

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mixed bag of trained dogs, ventriloquists, acrobats, and fancy roller-skaters; then they watched a patriotic drama concerning the actions of a heroic female Confederate spy against the foul ploys of an evil and lecherous Union general. From time to time Grew said, "Please make that a weeny bit softer, kiddies"; but they paid him no mind, nor did he expect they would. After a while he ceased to notice the noise as he tenderly soldered in place the diode which was his latest acquisition.

And then, finally, it was time for *Get It While You Can,* a program during which even Dr. Grew attended carefully, only pretending from time to time to make a ritual and face-saving clatter with his wire-stripper.

Last week Robby Rheinhart, the lovable M.C., had faced the cameras with a little girl in a wheel chair, and the week before that it had been a war veteran on crutches. *This* week, however, he had with him a sturdy old man with a white cane, as the shapely female assistants, beaming vacantly, wheeled out a table on which were two huge bowls filled with large, opaque capsules. After the applause died down, Robby introduced This Week's Guest of Honor, Mr. Edward Palumbo of the Calabrese Home For the Blind. Then there was a commercial. Mr. Palumbo was induced to say a few words and answer a few questions. Then there was another commerical, in which a wistful young man in a bathtowel sprayed his armpits with something from a squeeze-bottle. Then they dollied in once more on the oleaginous Rheinhart and on honest, rugged old Palumbo. While the orchestra played the theme music, the old guy took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, held up both hands. The music played slower, he dipped his hand in the starboard goldfish bowl, and pulled out a capsule.

The music stopped.

"Inside this capsule which our dear old Pal, Eddie Palumbo, has just selected at random," Robby said, breathlessly, "is inscribed the name of one of our wonderful *stoodio* audience. Every one of their names, as you all know, is inside one of those capsules, but only one at a time can be chosen. And NOW." He broke open the capsule, stared at the slip of paper. The cameras played over the faces in the audience, some tense, some picking their noses, some breaking into shy gestures as they caught their faces in the monitor. Robby milked the moment, then, in a high, breathless voice, declaimed, "Mis-ter . . . Herman . . . GRACKL!!!"

The camera panned in on the name on the slip, then a view of the audience again, finally focusing on someone who had just realized that *he* was Mr. Herman Grackl. Hesitantly, and in sections,

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like a telescope, he rose in his seat.

"Mr. Grackl?" burbled Robby. "Well, for gosh sakes, aren't *you* the lucky one! Come on *up* here, time's a-wasting, and—*Get it while you can!*"

The lucky man shambled forward, smirking and blinking and mumbling his jaws, while the music played a rapid tempo. After he had shaken hands with the M.C. and been turned—by main force—*away* from the shapely female assistants and *towards* the audience, he played with the buttons on his shabby coat while Robby asked him a few questions.

"Where are you *from,* Mr. Grackl?"

"Uh, I live right here in town."

"*Right here in town!* And what do you do for a living, Herman?"

"Um, I'm retired."

"Retired! Well, aren't *you* the lucky one! I wish I were—What am I *saying?*" Robby Rheinhart screamed, clutching his own throat with both hands and bulging his eyes. "The *sponsor* may be listening!" The audience roared. "Well. What did you *used* to do for a living, Herm?"

"I git socia' securidy," said Herm, sucking in his lips and cheeks, then expelling them.

The Grew children giggled. "Dope" said Isabel. "Dope yourself," Dudley said, promptly. Isabel dropped her card of bobby-pins and struck at him. Their screams finally attracted the attention of their father, to whom had suddenly occurred a solution to the problem of proper RF shielding. It was a full minute before he succeeded in wedging the kids apart and getting them reasonably quiet again. With a few deft twists of his long-nose pliers he then made the necessary adjustments.

"—in nineteen thirty-six?!" Robby Rheinhart was screaming. "*And out of oatmeal boxes!?* Well, isn't *that* something? Isn't that *some*-thing?"

"There, see," muttered Isabel petulantly, "and we missed what he said."

Perhaps the possibility again occurred to the M.C. that his *padrone* might be watching—conceivably with a stop-watch—because he suddenly became less strident and more businesslike. Old Mr. Palumbo, in return for $500 which the sponsors (Robby had already announced four times) were going to donate to the Calabrese Home For the Blind, thrust his big, gnarled hand into the other glass bowl and came up with another capsule, which Robby took from him and opened with pinch-lipped concentration. A glance at the contents and he had another fit of convulsions, combined with renewed manifestation of exophthalmia.

"Thirty-three hundred *dollars!*" he screamed, holding up the slip for the camera. "Every question

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that you answer correctly will be worth *thir*-ty *three hun*-dred *dol*-lars! *How about that!*"

Professor Grew groaned. The butcher who supplied his family with hamburger (the only meat they could afford) was becoming importunate. An increase in faculty salaries was, as the President of Ryland had pointed out only a month earlier, quite impossible at this time. Owing to the lousy season at football, alumni contributions had dropped to almost zero.

Glumly he watched Herman Grackl, shambling and blinking and mumbling his jaws, being escorted up the thirty steps to the throne from which he would answer—or fail to answer—the questions. A curtain parted on the studio stage, revealing a huge vault. Two presidents of well-known banks came forward and, one after the other, concealing the combinations, twirled dials. The door swung open, revealing another door. Two presidents of theological seminaries, followed by the national directors of two veterans' organizations, proceeded in turn to open four more doors by means of keys in their possession and in their possession only. Finally, in the innermost recess of the vault was revealed an envelope approximately the length and width of an Ispahani rug, and sealed with seven seals.

"Are you ready, Herm?" Robby, once again serious, asked.

Herm sucked in his cheeks, thrust out his lower lip, pulled it in again, nodded. "Ee-yup. Ready," he said, and gave an imbecile grin.

Robby Rheinhart broke the seven seals solemnly.

"Very well. And here is your first question. For $3300, tell us —*Who designed the Brooklyn Bridge?*"

Mr. Grackl's grin faded. He rolled his eyes, breathed noisily into the microphone, and wiped his brow on his coat-sleeve.

"You have twenty seconds in which to answer. It's worth three thousand dollars—so-o-o—*Get it while you can!*"

Professor Grew said, "George Washington Roebling, if I'm not mistaken."

"George Washington Roebling, if I'm not mistaken," said Mr. Grackl.

Professor Grew, hearing his very words repeated, smiled. Deadpan, Robby Rheinhart asked, "Is that your answer?"

"Of course it is. Certainly," said Grew.

"Of course it is. Certainly," said Grackl.

Professor Grew smiled—somewhat uncertainly, this time. Robby Rheinhart leaped into the air, clicked his heels, flung wide his arms, and shrieked, *"You're RIGHT! For thir-ty three hundred dol-lars!"* The audience burst into applause, and the band into

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music. Herman Grackl clasped his hands above his head and beamed. ("Silly ass," said Grew. Grackl's face fell. So did his hands.)

"Will you go for a second thirty-three hundred dollars, Herm?" the M.C. asked, when the noise died down. Herm hesitated, gazed all around him, chewed his lips.

"Go ahead," urged Grew. "You'll never get another chance like this."

"I-I think I'll go ahead," said Herman Grackl. A swallowing movement was clearly visible the length of his long neck. 'I'll never get another chance like this."

During the applause, and the commercial that followed, Grew bit his fingernails and, pondered. Three times—oh, there wasn't any doubt about it—the contestant, Mr. Herman Grackl, had repeated the words of Thomas Grew. Could it be a coincidence? Could (here, almost automatically, he laughed scornfully) could that fellow Rhine be right? Telepathy? "Well, we'll see," he said.

He saw soon enough.

"Our next question," announced Robby, solemn as a Senate investigator, "deals with a man who was a great man in his own right and whose *father* was also a great man. Now, Herm, for sixty-six hundred dollars: tell us: *Who* was Secretary of War in the Cabinet of President Garfield, and *who* was his father?"

The music played. "Oh, Christ," muttered Dr. Grew. "Oh. Oh. Oh. *Ahh!*" In a flash, the Paraclete descending, it came to him. History wasn't, never had been, his strong point; after all, he was a physicist, damn it! but this he'd learned somewhere, and—

The music stopped. Robby repeated the question. Determining to play it slow, play it cool, find out for certain-sure, Grew said, "In the cabinet of President James A. Garfield—"

"In the Cabinet of President James A. Garfield—" said Herm Grackl.

"James *Abram* Garfield," Grew said.

"James *Abram* Garfield," Grackl said. The audience laughed a little bit. The M.C. picked it up, put on a wry grin of admiring surprise.

"The son of the Great Emancipator—" Grew's voice trembled.

"The son of the Great Emancipator—" Grackl's voice didn't. Grew could stand it no longer.

"Robert-Todd-Lincoln!" he said, very rapidly.

"Robert Tom Lincoln!" shot out Grackl.

Robby Rheinhart took a quick gander at his paper, then another one off stage, then his face cleared. "Well, you got the middle name slightly wrong, but we'll accept it —you're RIGHT! For six-ty six hun-dred DOL-lars!"

It wasn't till the band stopped its victory blast that Grew found

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his voice again. "Listen, you better not take any more on tonight," he said. "I don't think I can do it again right now. Tell him you'll come back next week. I'll be in touch with you after the show."

This is just what Herman did. His expression, as the two shapely female assistants led him away, was dazed, pleased, and haunted.

Everbright, the Professor of Zoroastrian Philology, was a small, scrannel man with rufous eyes. For the past twenty odd years (tap-tap on his little bench, like Dr. Manet), he had made and mended not only his only shoes and those of his wife, father, father-in-law, and six children, but in his cellar did clandestine cobbling for a fashionable bootmaker. "A preposterous tale, Grew," said Professor Everbright, now.

Yeoville, Professor of Provençal prose, who (being a bachelor, and feeling he could not spare from his studies the time for an outside job) lived mostly on canned spaghetti, shook his pale and pendulous cheeks. "Not to be credited, my dear Tom," he said.

Wearing the turtle-neck sweater and puffing the bull-dog pipe, both of which had been obligatory equipment for chaplains at non-denominational colleges when he had first come to Ryland in the choppy wake of the Dayton Monkey Trial, De Wet (Comparative Religion) sighed. His burning eyes and deep pallor were due not so much to ascetic zeal as to his playing a set of skins in various crowded and ill-ventilated jazz joints at non-union rates. "I don't dig this bit," he said. "Where *is* that cat? I'm buzzed for time, man, I've got a jam session in the Biblical Chaldee in an hour."

There were noises of approval from other Ryland faculty members—English, Chemistry, Teutonic Languages (Per-Gunnar Maelstrom, the Ibsen expert, trimming his frayed cuffs with a small pair of scissors borrowed from Goldberg of Botany), and all the rest.

"Very well," said Grew. "We will demonstrate the fact as any other fact is demonstrated." He opened the door of the Faculty Lounge—cautiously, for it had only one hinge. "Herman, will you come in, please?"

Herman Grackl entered, nodding bashfully right and left. "I've told them and they don't believe me," said Professor Grew. "So suppose you tell them."

"Jeeze, maybe I should of taken the money and quit, huh?" said Grackl, apprehensively. "Well, I kind of like don't blame you professors. But it's a fact. Why me? Why not say a hundred other people? I dunno. Maybe it's a gift. It comes and it goes. Rudy Vallee, in the old days it use to be Rudy Vallee more than anyone else. Sometimes—whatever they had like playing at the old Steel Pier in

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Atlantic Cidy. Couple a weeks ago it was a drunken woman she was takin off alla her clothes down at—"

"What in the Hell are you talking about?" demanded Pighafetti, the biochemist, the envy of all the rest: kept all his family rosy-cheeked and warmly clad on his after-school-hours earnings as a pizza-baker. The strain told, however, in the deep circles under his eyes.

Herman Grackl made haste to oblige. "First of all, as a result of an industrial accident incurred at sea during the Prohibition Erra, I got like a plate in my head and it comes down—" he traced its descent with a large finger, "—in ta the jore, right around *here*." He paused. Dr. Grew nodded encouragement. "But nothing happen as a result a that, except I use to get a head-ache, off and on. Until I got this now pyorrhea condition and I lose haffa my teeth. There was a dennis in them days, maybe you heard of him? Dr. Goldpepper? Dr. Morris Goldpepper? Well, he made me this plate and he told me it had no less than two different metallic substances in it—"

Professor Everbright raised a thin, semi-transluscent hand. "One moment," he said, in a voice like the rustle of falling leaves at Vallambrosa. "Are we to understand that you receive communications through your false teeth via the Marconi waves?"

"Your technical terms are a little archaic, Elmer," said Dr. Grew; "but in substance– well, yes."

"You stick to your Department and I'll stick to mine," Everbright said, with unexpected fire. "I'd like to see how *you'd* make out on a Pahlevi palimpsest with Kufic superscriptions all over it!"

Grew hastily signalled to Grackl, who had been listening with mingled incomprehension and respect, to continue. "So that's it," said Herm. "*How* it happens, Ida know. *When* it's going to happen, I never use to be able to predick. It'd fade in—'High-ho, everybody' —fade out again. Sometimes a short innerlude of organ music. Sometimes, if it's inny immediate neighborhood, I get a police call. Once inna while: TV. But I *never* got anything as what I mean *clear* until I got Professor Grew's message the other night. All them creck answers! And then, afterwards, he told me to come over to his house, so I come; he says to come here, so I'm here. And that's it."

There was silence. Then— "Demonstration, I promised a demonstration," said Dr. Grew, bustling around with slips of torn-up examinations (the University providing no scrap paper for Faculty use) and pencils which students had from time to time imprudently left behind in class or lab. Half of the assembled savants he sent outside with Herman Gra-

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ckl, the other half remained with him. And he then and there proceeded to send such messages and other data ($E = MC^2$, for example), via his little black box, through the dental prosthesis of Mr. Herman Grackl, as demonstrated conclusively the absolute truth of his account thereof.

However, there were no shouts of exultation. Dr. Yeoville sighed heavily and said, "Very well, we are convinced. Now what? Is it your intention to attempt to market this curious engine with monies raised from the Ryland Faculty? If so, here is fifty cents: I shall go without lunch for three days."

Grew smiled crookedly. He then spoke (Busztromowicz of the English Department later declared) as never man spoke to man before. With burning words that blazed and crackled in the ambient air he sketched their poverty—deep, of ancient duration, the scars of it beyond cure. He spoke of the utter contempt in which they were held; the vast sums spent annually in the United States on bubble gum, Tom Collins mixer, and pin-ball equipment, he compared with the pittances devoted to higher education . . .

They listened, their eyes burned hotly, they made little growling noises in their throats and chests; shuffled their cracked shoes.

Finally, "All that you say is true," acknowledged Maelstrom. "Painfully, agonizingly true. But —as my students too often ask me —'So what?' "

"So this: Colleagues, I but state a simple fact when I say that we have here among us an accumulation of knowledge in no way inferior to that possessed by the sponsors of *Get It While You Can.* It is impossible that a question should be asked which at least one of our number could not answer. We have been poor long enough. Riches now lie within our grasp."

The University Poet-in-Residence, his lungs weakened by the steamy fumes of the dog-laundry in which he toiled after hours, coughed fitfully. "Your proposal, Dr. Grew," he said in a thin voice, "is quite obvious. It is also dishonest, unethical, and meretricious. I am in favor of accepting it."

When the applause died away one single head was seen to shake. It was grey, and belonged to the Professor of Hellenic Civilization. "I fear me," he muttered. "I fear me. Beware of *hubris,* the sin of overweening pride, lest it destroy us. Is not poverty as becoming to scholars as a scarlet bridle to a white horse?"

"If Homer said that," roared Professor Maelstrom, "no wonder they threw him off a cliff!"

An unexpected touch of color glowed in the other's cheeks. "That was Hesiod, you Gothic oaf!" he snapped. Then the fight went out of him and he slumped in his seat,

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waved his hand in feeble surrender. "yeypaod, yeypaod," he whispered. "Do what you will: I shall be with you."

The faculty made the acquaintance of Herman's lady-friend, a Mrs. Doll Moomaw, who had accompanied him and had waited in an outer room.

"Well-preserved," conceded Grew, in a whisper.

"And pneumatic," observed Everbright.

"I told Doll that you professors are, now, trying to find me a job, said Grackl, winking ponderously over her shoulder.

"I be damned and go-to-Hell," said Doll, briskly, "if I can figure out what Herman could do at a college besides sweeping out the can: but listen: as long's he makes some money. I think he's had this same suit on since the six-day bicycle races."

"Aw, now, *Doll*," said Herman, smirking bashfully.

"The late *Mr.* Moomaw, rest his soul, was of a short, stocky built; otherwise—"

But here Herman grabbed ahold and pulled her out, still explaining why the deceased's suits were of no use to his successor-apparent.

Professor Yeoville shook his head and dewlaps. "That woman worries me," he said.

But Grew, sanguine, clapped him on the back. "Ho, ho, you old bachelor!" he chuckled. Yeoville winced, fell silent.

The following Sunday night the Faculty of Ryland University (excluding, of course, the Professor of Athletic Science, who was known to be a fink for the Board of Trustees and the Alumni Association, and had therefore been omitted from the cabal) assembled behind the locked doors of their Lounge. Dr. Grew, speaking into his mechanism and gazing at the television set smuggled up, said, "If you receive me okay, Herman, stroke your right cheek twice."

Herman Grackl stroked his right cheek twice. ("Hot diggetty!" exclaimed an excited pedagogue—and was stricken silent by the warning glares of the others.)

That night Herman answered questions involving the tributaries of the Sepik Watershed, the more obscure poems of Fulke Greville, the Eleventh Mihir Yast, and the Presidents of the U. S. Congress under the Articles of the Confederation (in chronological order). He answered them all correctly; after which, by a show of hands, he was advised to retire until the following week. He had won, the previous week's score included, $19,800.

"Oughtn't we to have stopped right there?" the Professor of Hellenic Civilization asked.

"Why, it would come to less than a thousand dollars apiece," Grew objected.

"A thousand dollars!" repeated

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the Professor of Zoroastrian Philology, in tremulous tones.

"We must learn to think big," pointed out the Professor of Provençal prose. "I think we should wait until we have at least *two* thousand dollars apiece!"

In the month which followed, Herman Grackl, by naming the Mayors of the Palace, twenty-three dwarf stars in order of magnitude, all the vessels involved in the Battle of Lepanto, the Dodecanese Islands with their principal cities and populations and chief exports, all the steps involved in the Activated Sludge method of sewage disposal and descriptions thereof; by explaining the systems of proportional representation obtaining in four Scandinavian countries and Switzerland, Frenet's formulas for a space curve, the Twenty-Four Traditional Measures of Welsh poetry, and the meaning of thirty-two symbols from the Popol Voh; and by correctly identifying twelve Proto-Etruscan artifacts, paintings by Murillo, Winterhalter, and Rembrandt Peale, as well as musical pieces by Arne, Bartok, Pietro Yon, and Henry VIII . . . became a national figure.

He was featured on the covers of *Time* and *Life* magazines.

The then President of the United States, being asked in press conference about a clause in the tariff bill he was urging on Congress, replied, "Well, you are informing me of something about which the precise particulars I am not aware of. After all, I am not Herman Grackl." (Laughter.)

It was a merry group of scholars which assembled in the Faculty Lounge the evening of Herman's sixth appearance of *Get It While You Can*. Dr. Grew passed around the latest box of cigars which Chromo-Bright Tube and Pipe had presented to Mrs. Novack, and she to him; as one who was shortly to cut up a kitty in excess of $957,000 (for all concerned had determined that this would be the last evening), he felt he could well afford the gesture. The Professor of Levantine Archaeology declared that he had been pricing Jaguars. The Poet-In-Residence argued the claims of the Ferrari. Dr. Maelstrom announced a certain method he intended to recommend to the President of the University to relieve his (the President's) prostate condition. And then all conversation died down as they closed in to watch their protegé engage in preliminary banter with Robby Rheinhart, the genial M.C. of the program.

"Herm, there seem to be a few changes in your appearance," Robby said.

"Hey, you know, man, he's right," observed the Professor of Comparative Religion. "Like he looks different, somehow."

Herman Grackl smirked. "Well,

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Robby, when you're in love, it *does* make a change."

Robby did a double-take. "Did you say—*in love?*"

Another smirk. "Ee-yup. T'tell the truth—I'm engaged!"

Grew exclaimed, "He didn't say anything to us about— But I suppose it was inevitable—"

Robby inquired, "Well, Herm, is your fiancée by any chance *here* tonight?

With a dip of his knees and a bob of his head, Herm allowed as how she was, and, with much palaver, coyness, applause, laughter, and hoo-hah, the camera showed the fiancée to all America. Mrs. Moomaw, beamed, bowed, bridled, and displayed her superabundant charms to the ambient air.

"—so she says, 'Honey,' she says, 'the whole country is lookin at you so why don't you get yerself fancied up?' So I says, 'You are right, Doll.' "

"*That's* what's like new about him," the Professor of Comparative Religion exclaimed. "Dig those crazy threads, man!"

And, after more persiflage, the refurbished Herman mounted the steps to the throne. The ceremony of opening the vault and removing the questions was gone through, and, as Robby Rheinhart broke the seventh seal, a certain amount of tension gripped those present in the Faculty Lounge.

"*Now.* Following the death of Alexander the Great—" ("Hah!" snorted the Professor of Hellenic Civilization, rubbing his hands.) "—there arose in the East a dynasty known as the Sassanian, or New Persian, Dynasty." (The Hellenicist bit his lip and ignored the glance of ill-concealed triumph thrown his way by the Professor of Zoroastrian Philology.) "There were twenty-eight members of this dynasty. For Thirty-three hundred dollars a point, Herm, name all twenty-eight members of the Sassanian, or New Persian, Dynasty. You have already won nine hundred and fifty-seven thousand dollars. If you name all twenty-eight correctly you will win ninety-two thousand four hundred dollars, which will make a total OF." He paused. "One *million.* Forty-nine thousand . . . four-hundred DOLLARS! Good luck, Herm. You have twenty seconds to think of your answer. Should you miss, of course," he concluded, cheerfully, "you lose everything."

The music began to play. "All right," asked Grew, flipping the switch on his hootenanny, "what's the first one?"

"Artaxerxes I," said Professor Everbright.

"Artaxerxes I," repeated Grew. "Got that, Herman?"

The music stopped. "Sapor, Hormisdas, Vahrahan, Narses," mumbled Everbright, counting on his fingers.

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"All right, Herm," burbled Robby. "Your twenty seconds are up."

"He actually looks worried," chuckled Maelstron. "What an actor!"

"For three thousand, three hundred dollars, tell us the name of the first Sassanid King of Persia."

Herman said nothing. "Artaxerxes I," repeated Grew. Herman cast an agonized look around him.

"I'll have to call for an answer, Herm," said Robby.

"He's not acting!" shouted Professor Maelstrom. "He doesn't hear you! The transmitter isn't working!"

"The transmitter is in perfect order!" Grew insisted. "ARTAXERXES I!" he yelled at the top of his voice. Herman's face broke out in sweat. He suddenly clapped his hand to his mouth, then began to slap, pat, prod, and poke his pockets, one after the other. Again and again. And then the hideous truth came to Professor Grew. "He's looking for his old teeth!" he wailed. "That blowsy old bitch he shacked up with—she's hypnotized him or something—she not only made him get a new suit of clothes, *but she made him get a new set of teeth, too!*"

The Poet-In-Residence uttered a hoarse scream and fell senseless to the floor. Pandemonium raged in the Faculty Lounge, while (unheard) on the screen Robby Rheinhart slowly shook his head.

"Hubris," whispered the Professor of Hellenic Civilization, as tears rolled down his seamed, emaciated face. "Hubris. Whom the gods would destroy—"

The proprietor of the chow mein restaurant where Dr. Thomas Grew had formerly worked passed him on the street the week following. Having a Confucian respect for scholarship, and being struck by the Professor's threadbare condition, he rehired him on the spot as supernumary bus-boy. Grew works there three nights a week, and though the pay is minimal and the tips scant, he is frequently able to bring home nourishing scraps of food.

It was there one night, whilst surreptitiously slipping into his great-coat pocket the contents of a bowl of left-over won-tons which the ex-general had earmarked for his Peke, that there occurred to the foreign-devil bus-boy in a blaze of illumination the practical application of what has since become known to all the world as the Grew-Grackl-Goldpepper Principle of Bimetallic Coupling which has made such revolutionary changes in satellite communications.

Under the circumstances it would be pointless to cavil at the fact that the overriding needs of the national security preclude the possibility of a patent; and that, hence, none of the three men has been able to realize any financial profits whatsoever.

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An instructive new fantasy by the respected author of such memorable stories as "The Gnurrs Come from the Voodvork Out" and "Mrs. Poppledore's Id."

ALL THE TEA IN CHINA

by R. Bretnor

IT WAS MIGHTY LUCKY FOR me that my Grandma Whitford caught on in time. If she hadn't, chances are I would've grown up just like her Great-uncle Jonas Hackett, and come to the same sort of end, shaking hands with the Devil himself before breakfast, and with not even a Christian tombstone over me at the last for folks to come look at.

I was down in an empty stall at the barn, making a trade with Jim Bledsoe. Jim was snivelling and crying and begging me not to make him go through with the trade, which he'd already agreed to, and I wasn't giving an inch.

He picked up his 12-gauge Iver-Johnson, and his two Belgian hares, and his skates, and fondled them kind of, and put them back down with the rest of his stuff; and he said, maybe for the twentieth time, "Aw, B-Bill, you—you can have all the rest. But p-p-please lemme keep my old shotgun, *p-please.*"

And I said, "Not for all the tea in China, I won't. No sirree bob!"

It was right then Grandma showed up, her little eyes crackling and sparkling, and her lips set as tight as when she was mad at some fresh city peddler. Small as she was, she grabbed my left ear and twisted real hard.

"Ow!" I said.

She twisted again. "All the tea in China, indeed!" she snapped. "I'll all-the-tea-in-China you, boy. Now you give those things back to Jimmy—this instant! And Jimmy, you take 'em and skedaddle on home."

"Aw, Gran'ma," I grumbled, "we're only making a *trade.* There's nothing wrong with just— *Yow!*"

"Don't lie to me, boy. You were chiselling him out of his eyeteeth. That whole big pile for a one-bladed jack-knife and a busted War sword! It's that bad Hackett blood in you, I do declare. You're getting to be as wicked and sinful as Great-uncle Jonas." She looked

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at Jimmy again, who was fiddling around, still scared to pick up his things. "Go ahead, take 'em," she told him. "The sheriff won't ever hear how you burned down his outhouse—that's a promise. When I get through with Bill here, he won't say a word." She twisted my ear harder than ever. "No sirree bob—not for all the tea in China, he won't!"

And as soon as Jimmy had beat it, she marched me out of the barn, and straight past the house while the hired-hand snickered, and around the big corn-patch, and right up the east slope of Hackett's Hill. She didn't slow down or let go of my ear till we got clean to the top; and even though Hackett's Hill isn't more than a couple hundred feet high, I was just about out of breath.

She told me to sit. "Wonder why I brought you up here?"

Hackett's Hill wasn't worth climbing. It was sort of lumpy and brown, with nothing but scrubby dry weeds growing on it. All you could see from the top was the Post Road winding around it before straightening out down the valley, and our house, and Smathers'. So I nodded.

"I brought you," she said, "because it was right about here that Jonas Hackett's place was before he was took by the Devil, and because I can see his spirit's strong in you, and because I aim to drive it clean out."

She stared at me till it seemed that a cold little wind blew across Hackett's Hill and into my spine. "Boy," she asked, "what do you want to be when you' grown?"

I looked down at my shoes. "I want to be rich," I told her defiantly. "I want to move down to Boston, and have a big house, and a carriage, and a gold watch and chain, and tell folks what to do."

"I *thought* so," she said. "Well, that's all right for some, whose natures are honest and can stand off temptation—but it isn't for you. You're going to Harvard College instead, and let 'em make you a doctor."

"No, *ma'am,*" I answered right back. "I wouldn't do that. No sirree bob. Not for—" Then I remembered my ear and shut up.

"Not for all the tea in China," she finished up for me. *"No sirree bob.* And that's just what Great-uncle Jonas answered them back when they wanted *him* to go down to Harvard. Now you sit real still, and don't interrupt, and I'll tell you the story. Only don't go telling anyone else, because it's nothing we're proud of, and it's best kept in the family."

She gave me a look, and I promised . . .

By the time Jonas was forty (Grandma said), he was a fine-looking man. Maybe he was a little too lean, and I guess his eyes looked a little too much like cold

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chunks of gray glass in dark caves. They say, too, that his big, pale hands were always opening and closing all by themselves, as if they were hungry. But he had curly black hair, and a good set of white teeth, and a walk like a lion out hunting.

(In my mind, I saw Great-uncle Jonas clear as could be, and I shivered.)

Besides (she went on), by that time he owned a good part of the land around here, and had loans out on lots more. He had some business in Boston, and down in New York, which he kept to himself. But everyone knew that he owned a three-quarter share in the tea-clipper *Queen Of The East,* because everyone knew young Middleton Martin, who was her first mate and the one friend Jonas had in the world.

You'd have thought there'd have been lots of men willing to call him their friend, and plenty of women hereabouts to marry him at the drop of a hat. But there weren't. Only Middleton Martin forgave him for the things he had done—maybe because he'd been off to sea so much of the time, and never seen Jonas at work. You see, boy, Jonas was never content just making a dollar. He had to make it *off* someone, so it hurt—and the more it hurt the better he liked it.

Let's say a neighbor had something that'd just about kill him if anyone knew, and Jonas found out. Pretty soon he'd show up and offer to buy the man's team, or his pasture, or even his house. He'd look it over, taking his time, and they'd have a talk, friendly like, and finally they'd get to the price —and Jonas'd offer a dollar, or maybe fifteen, or fifty at the outside. Usually his neighbor would shout he was crazy. Then Jonas would tighten the screws. He'd whisper what he'd found out. He'd let the man cuss and threaten, and argue and beg. He'd pretend to give in. And right at the last, he'd tighten his jaw and say, "No sirree bob. Not for all the tea in China, I won't."

(Grandma paused for a minute, but I just pulled at the dry grass at my feet instead of looking up at her.)

He always did it that way (Grandma said). It was the same when he'd clamp down on a loan. He was hated by every man, woman, and child within fifteen miles. He'd built a fine, big, new house, and he lived there alone except for two foreign servants he'd brought in from the city. He never went out to visit, even his kin, or showed up at Church, or had anyone over except Middleton Martin. And all through the years, he never so much as looked at one of the girls. Then all of a sudden, when he'd turned forty, he started courting Mary Ann Thorpe.

She was the prettiest girl in the

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valley, twenty years younger than he, with hair like honey. It was known that Jonas had a money hold on her father, but what really started tongues wagging was that she'd been promised to Middleton Martin for close on three years. A few said it was queer that Jonas Hackett would do such a thing to the one friend he had, but mostly folks thought it was just like his nature. She was Middleton's girl, and no man could find anyone finer; and betraying a friendship just made him want her the more. The whole valley waited for the *Queen Of The East* to come back with her cargo of tea. And because Jonas was Middleton's friend, and for fear of what he could do to her father, Mary Ann let him sit on her porch in the evenings, and tried to pretend she didn't know what he'd come for.

That went on for three months, with Mary Ann crying herself quietly to sleep every night; and after awhile there was even some lowdown gossip that she was going to accept Jonas Hackett for his money, and because of what he might do, and because his house was the finest house in the country, in the prettiest place.

(Grandma broke off, and I thought to myself she was making it up, because Hackett's Hill was the ugliest place in the county, not the prettiest. Besides, searching around, I couldn't see any sign of where a house might have been, not even a small one. But her face looked as if she was telling the truth. It made me feel queer.)

Then (Grandma said), the *Queen Of The East* came in from the sea with Middleton Martin aboard, and he took the stage straight for home, wanting to get back to Mary Ann as fast as he could. But first, not knowing a thing, and it being right on the way, he stopped off a minute or two to leave Jonas a present. Jonas shook hands with him just as if nothing had happened, and Middleton gave him a bundle tied up in canvas, which he'd brought all the way from Foochow.

"Open it up," Middleton said.

So Jonas took off the canvas, and there was a sort of a cage about two feet square. It was made of lacquered wood and bamboo, and pieces of fancy red cord laced around and criss-crossed inside, and there were bits of silk like bright little flags at the corners, with Oriental writings.

"What is it?" asked Jonas.

"A tea merchant had it," Middleton told him. "He'd got it from one of the caravan men, who'd brought it in from the mountains out behind China. It's a demon trap. Suppose you want to catch you a demon. You set it down by some track where they run, and by morning most likely you'll find a big fat one." He slapped Jonas' back, and roared with laughter. "Works every time. Doesn't even

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need bait. It's just what you need!

"What do they do with the demon?" Jonas asked him, not laughing at all.

Middleton cocked a red eyebrow, but he saw that Jonas was serious, so he made out like he was. "If he's a water-demon," he said, "they burn him up right there in the cage, but if he's a fire-demon—you can tell by the smell—then they chuck him into a well or a lake, cage and all."

Jonas frowned. Quickly he shoved the cage back behind him, as if to protect it. "I wouldn't do that," he declared.

Then Middleton told him goodbye, and went on up to Mary Ann's house. But that was just the first time he saw Jonas Hackett that day.

(Grandma snorted.) He found out soon enough. He was back inside half an hour, and Jonas, standing out on the porch, saw by the look on his face that he knew.

"*Well?*" he said.

Middleton spoke very softly. "Jonas, I didn't use to believe what folks said about you. I almost do now. What do you want with my Mary Ann?"

"I'm going to marry her," Jonas answered.

"Suppose she says no?"

"I can ruin her dad," Jonas said.

The shoulders of Middleton Martin's blue jacket went tight. "Suppose *I* say no, Jonas?"

"Berths are scarce, and you won't have yours," Jonas told him. "The *Queen* is *my* ship."

For a while they looked at each other without saying a word. Then Middleton said, "We've been friends, Jonas. We've been friends a long time. I guess we can still be. Just say you don't want her—that it's been a mistake. Give her up, Jonas."

All the blood left Jonas' lips. "Not for all the tea in China!" he snapped.

Middleton laughed in his face. "All right, have it your way. I've talked to Mary Ann. I've talked to her father. We're getting married next week. Wreck him—he'll be living with us. Take my berth—I've got a new one, a command of my own, bigger and faster." And with that he turned his back and walked off.

(Grandma shaded her eyes from the sun, and pointed east of the road.) The Thorpe place was just beyond Smathers'. Even now, you can hardly see it from here. Jonas spent some bad nights, I've been told, pacing the floor and saying never a word, all eaten inside because not two miles off were three people who'd told him where to head in. The truth was he'd gone off half-cocked. Middleton and Mary Ann and her pa knew the worst he could do, and they just didn't care. He kept thinking of Mary Ann being Mrs. Middleton Martin, and how folks in the valley would laugh in his

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face; and the closer they got to the wedding, the worse he became. Those who saw him said his hands were clinching and clenching harder than ever, and he walked with his teeth skinned back like a wolf's. Then, just two nights before the wedding was set to take place, he got his idea.

He was sitting in the dark in his parlor, thinking what he'd like to do to Middleton Martin, and racking his brains for some new dirty trick, when all of a sudden he stretched out his hand—and there was the demon-trap, which he'd completely forgotten. As soon as he touched it, the idea came into his head.

Jonas knew that Orientals know a lot of things better not known, and he figured that if they took the time to build demon-traps, those traps would most likely catch demons. Also, he knew there'd been demons and devils aplenty in Massachusetts back in the old Salem days, and that Satan himself still had business in Boston, because he'd been mixed up in it often enough. And he reasoned that if a little trap'd catch little devils, why it'd only take a great big one to catch the biggest of all.

Showing his teeth in the moonlight, Jonas walked out in the night to the Post Road, which ran right past his gate, and he looked up and down. In those days, it was straight as an arrow all the way down the valley, and he guessed that it was the track the Devil would use when he went up to Boston. Right away, he made up his mind that he'd catch him—but he wasn't intending to waste him by chucking him, sizzling and sputtering, into the ocean—not Jonas! He was going to keep him right there in the cage till he fixed it so he could get Mary Ann.

Jonas looked at the moon, and laughed without making a sound, and he went back in the house, and woke up his two foreign servans, a man and a woman, and sent them off into town to buy stuff—lumber and silk, and red-colored paint, and cord and bamboo. Later that day, old Lem Smathers saw him hammering away in the yard like a madman, with the big trap darned near finished, but he wouldn't tell Lem anything. It was the servants that told it next day, after it happened, because right at the last they found out what he was up to and ran off and quit him. The rest folks just figured out.

Night came, dark and angry, with storm clouds drowning the stars and hiding the moon except once in a while for just a few seconds. And Great-uncle Jonas hitched a team to his devil trap—for, making it strong, he'd built it too heavy to carry—and dragged it out, and set it up by the road right under his window. Then he went back in to stay up and watch, leaving the window propped open

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in spite of the weather so he could hear if anything happened. It stormed and it rained, and the wind blew and blew, and several times he had to go take a look, just in case, and he got soaked to the skin. But he didn't think about that. Then, towards three o'clock, the sky started to clear, and gales up aloft tore the black clouds to shreds—and all of a sudden, down by the trap, Jonas heard a stumbling and stamping, and a roaring and ranting like he'd never heard in his life.

Jonas knew that the worst thing you could do, going into a deal, was to seem to be anxious, so he walked down as slow as he could, his hands in his pockets. Sure enough, there was his trap, with its little silk flags fluttering their Oriental letters in the cold breeze. And sure enough, in it, all tangled up in the strings, was the Devil.

He didn't have hoofs or a tail, or anything like it. He was six foot tall, dark and handsome. He wore a big beaver hat, and a greatcoat, and flowers all over his vest, and a gold watch and chain. When he saw Jonas Hackett, he quit his struggling and swearing, and tried to pretend not to be mad, and actually smiled.

"Good mawnin', suh," he said, bowing. "Mah name is Legree. Ah'm a tobacco auctioneer from No'th Carolina, headin for Boston. Ah seem to have blundered into this heah Yankee contraption."

Jonas didn't bow back. "That's right," he agreed, "sure seems like you have. But you're no auctioneer, no more'n I am."

The Devil shrugged just a little, and fixed up his smile. "Ah see, suh," he said, "that Ah'm dealin' with a true judge of man's nature. Ah was lyin', suh, Ah admit it. But Ah was only tryin' to spare the Abolitionist sentiments heahabouts. Truth is, Ah'm a slave-dealer from way down in Memphis. And now, suh, Ah'll oblige you to set me free from this gadget—"

"You're a slave-dealer, right enough," Jonas answered, "but not like you meant it. Down South, you'd show up as a Yankee. I know you, Satan."

At that, the Devil couldn't help letting a wisp of steam, smoke, and flame leak out of his nostrils, and he quickly lit a cheroot trying to cover it up. Then he smiled again, a smile that would've scared most any man clean out of his skin. "You'd best open the door of this thing," he suggested, "before I break it down and come get you."

Jonas just shook his head. "If you could've, I guess you'd have got me already," he said coldly.

Well, the Devil couldn't control himself any longer, and the show he put on made all the cussing and roaring he'd gone in for before seem like nothing at all. He described the things that would happen to Jonas if he ever got out.

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He spouted out cinders and sparks, and smoke poured from him, and red flames; and the sulphur and brimstone smelled up the valley for days. He even took his true natural shape a few times.

But Jonas hung on, and didn't heed him at all, because he knew he could force him into a deal. And, watching real close, after almost an hour he saw him beginning to tire.

Finally, the Devil worked himself up to a real fever pitch. He grabbed the bars of the cage, and shook them till all the ground quaked, and in a voice like thunder and lightning he bawled, "OPEN THE DOOR!"

And Jonas knew at once that the Devil was just about done. He looked him right in the eye. "I wouldn't do *that,*" he said firmly. "Not for all the tea in China. No sirree bob."

There was a great dreadful hush, as if everything over the world had just stopped. Slowly, the Devil eased up. He lit another cheroot. He twirled his moustache. "Wouldn't you?" he said with a smile. *"Wouldn't you, Jonas?"*

Then and there, Jonas forgot all about Mary Ann, and what all the neighbors would say, and Middleton Martin. All he could think of was how much money there would be in that tea. "We-ell," he said to the Devil, *"maybe* I would."

"That's fine," said the Devil. "It's a deal!"

Jonas backed away from the door. He knew that the Devil had to keep that sort of a bargain. "Hold on a minute. That tea'll have to be packed in tea chests and bales, and set down right here."

"You're a hard man," the Devil declared, "but you've got me. That's the way it'll be."

"Shake," said Great-uncle Jonas; and they shook.

And then he opened the door.

Grandma eyed me very severely. "That was how Jonas Hackett came to his end," she said after a minute. "Let it be a lesson to you, boy. Don't you *ever* forget it!"

"Did—did he get all that tea from the Devil?" I gasped.

"Every last bit. There was one peal of thunder, and a flash from one end of the sky to the other, and sure enough there it was."

She paused. With a heel, she kicked at the thin inch of topsoil covering up Hackett's Hill. Under it was a thick, dark brown leafmold, and some rotten wood like the corner of a broken old chest; and the smell of tannin came up as strong as could be.

We looked at the Hill, more than two hundred feet high and a thousand feet long, sitting squarely on top of where Jonas' place used to be.

"All the tea in China," Grandma said. "Yes sirree bob. There was a lot of it, too."

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There were not many of them left, and it was vital to take every precaution against harm from a probably hostile environment. But life could become unbearably boring, particularly for the young, inside the dome.

SOMEBODY TO PLAY WITH

by Jay Williams

THE CHILDREN USUALLY MET before school near the emergency air-lock, behind a mountain of crates full of spare parts and supplies. Through the foggy plastic of the dome they could see the gritty landscape with its fringe of eroded hills, and not far away the spongy upper branches of a fungus forest which grew in a deep ravine they called Grand Canyon, after a place on Earth they knew only from their Social Studies class.

Nick was always the first to arrive. He approached in short dashes, keeping a wary eye out for the Enemy, which today was Comanches. He dropped behind a case labelled INSTRUMENTS CHF IPST X-8852 HANDLE WITH CARE, and lying flat on his stomach turned his head to glance upward at the black stencilled letters which before his very eyes melted into a signpost saying FORT AUSTIN 8 MILES. A flint-pointed arrow buzzed over him and stuck quivering in the sign; when he squinched up his eyes tightly it almost became real. Slowly, he wriggled forward from the shadow of the cases into the bright, reddish sunlight that came through the dome. A swift glance to right and left, and he could emerge into the open.

Somebody said, "Bang! Gotcha."

It was Snooky. He had climbed the crate mountain, and from its summit lay prone with his rifle pointing at Nick. The rifle was made from a two-foot section of aluminum tubing and a scrap of styrofoam.

Nick dodged back. "You did not," he retorted. "Bang! I got *you*."

Snooky fell dead. Then he got up and scrambled down the mountainside, jumping from box to box. His lower lip was thrust forward.

"That's no fair," he complained. "Every time anybody shoots you, you always say they missed. Why

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don't I get to kill you sometime?"

"Oh, hell," said Nick. "Who cares? Who wants to play this kid stuff anyway?"

Snooky, who was just seven, looked at him in admiration. "Hell, yes," he said.

Nick leaned against the tight, resilient skin of the dome and stared outside. "I'm going out again after school," he said.

"Are you? Are you really, Nick?"

"Sure? Why not? Nobody ever knows."

"Knows what?" asked Judith. She and O-Sato had come up hand in hand while the boys were talking.

"When we go outside."

"Oh, *that.*"

"Are you coming with me?" Nick demanded.

"Maybe. Well, if O-Sato wants to."

The Japanese girl shrugged. "I have to do slide rule exercises this afternoon. Maybe tomorrow."

"Ah-h-h! Slide rule. That junk," Nick sneered. "That's for beginners."

"I like it," O-Sato said, with her wide, white smile. She never took offense.

The others were coming: the Dalgleish twins, nine-year-old Jon Bessemer who was only a month younger than Nick, the Firdusi kids, and little Justinian Brandeis, who was five and lived in a world of his own.

Judith hugged Sally Firdusi, her creamy cheek against the other girl's brown one like cameo and sardonyx in a seal ring.

"Where's Virginie?" she said.

"In bed. She's got the swell-ups."

"Will she die?" Justinian asked, his blue eyes round and clear.

"'Course not, stupid. Nobody ever dies of the swell-ups except grownups."

"Yeah. That's why they're called grownups," said Nick. "Grown-up, swell-up, fall-out, fall dead."

He swung away from the others, staring grimly through the plastic. Judith came behind him and put her hand lightly on his shoulder.

"What's the matter, Nicky?" she said.

"Nothing."

"If you want, I'll go outside with you. So will the others."

"I don't care." He turned to look at her, biting his lip. "I get sick of it, every day just the same. School, chores, the same old games, the same old stuff: 'Never go outside without an adult,' 'Wear your mask,' 'Remember you are from Earth.' Hell!" He kicked sullenly at the base of the dome, at the sealing strip beyond which waited the rusty sand. "I'm tired of canned shows, and these cowboys and Indians and outlaws of Sherwood Forest, and all that crap. Outside . . ."

He looked again at the scarlet and ochre branches which pro-

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truded above the ravine, only a few hundred yards away. "That's *real,* out there," he whispered. "Not all that junky three-vee, or old movies, or stupid books. I've read all the books. I want somebody to play with."

Judith drew back, hurt. "You've got me. And all of us."

"Yeah. Bunch of little snotnoses. And the rest of you—Jon and you and O-Sato and Virginie—you're always worried about going out."

"But if they caught us, Nicky . . . ?"

"So what? What could they do? Send us back to the ash-pile?"

"But we *do* go out with you. Gosh, you sound as though we never do."

"And isn't it fun? Isn't it? More fun than the domes?"

She nodded. "Sure, it's fun. If they'd just let us alone. Let us go out whenever we wanted to. But they're so afraid . . ."

He shrugged. "*Jee*-sus! Grown-up are afraid of everything."

"It's nine-thirty," O-Sato broke in. "We'd better get cracking. *Arúite ikimasho.*"

Justinian took her hand. "What's that mean?"

"Let's walk," she replied. "Are you learning French from Virginie, too?"

"*Hai,*" said Justinian. "*Je fais de mon mieux.*"

Nick stuck his hands deep in the pockets of his coverall. "Jon," he said, "what about it? Outside after school?"

Jon scratched his bristly head—the hair was just beginning to grow in again after an attack of blue fungus. "I'll have to ask my Dad if he needs me," he said. "He told me yesterday he wanted me to help him clean up the observatory."

Nick mimicked him, "I'll *hafta* ask my *Dad.* Okay, sonny. Don't forget to wear your mask."

He could not have said why he was so bitter. After all, today was no different from any other day. But maybe that was the trouble. It was like those houses you used to make out of blocks, when you were little: you piled one block on another block on another block and all of a sudden it was too high and the whole thing collapsed. Too many days like every other day. A restlessness burned in him; a need for elbow room, for space, for privacy and play somewhere out of the cramped quarters of the city of domes. He was the oldest of the children; maybe that was why he felt it most. And particularly now, in the warm season between the sandstorms and the freeze, the season when things began to move and stir out there, when the sheltered ravines came alive and there was so much to see, so many places to explore, so much to pretend.

Jon felt it, too, and so did the others, but they had other diversions, equally compelling. Jon and

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O-Sato found a deep and peculiar joy in mathematics and in the jobs they were allotted: Jon loved working in the observatory with its shining instruments, the ticking of the clockwork, the regular, measured, quiet routine, and O-Sato could spend hour after hour with number puzzles and log tables. As for Judy, she had her ups and downs: she was as good as any boy in making up games and plays, and outside she was as quick as he in the shifting sands, and as bold in exploration, but then for long periods she would turn to the books in the Library, and lose herself in the same old stories and seem to be quite content. As for the younger kids—Nick shrugged. They didn't know yet what they wanted.

If I only had a scooter of my own, he thought. Or a copter. I'd go and go and go . . .

He lost a little of his restlessness in school. Monsieur Bernstein was a good teacher for whom there were no such things as dull subjects. "I teach living," he said, and so the children could never be quite sure what they might find set before them on any given day. He spoke five languages without a trace of an accent, and one of his favorite games for enlivening class periods was to switch from language to language to see how quickly the children could follow him.

"Nick!" he might snap. *"Dites-moi, qui était Platon? Répondez en russe, s'il vous plaît."*

"Filosof grechiskii, tovarishch professor."

"Nick wa wáke ga wakatte imasu. Sta a voi, Signor Giannino."

Or he might, in the same way, jump unexpectedly from one theme to the next, as this morning a chance question led him from a discussion of Plato to the Greek city-states, to Pythagoras and the magic of numbers, to magic in general, to animal totems, to primitive societies, to the extinction of the Tasmanians, and so to a brief discussion of ecology. None of the children understood everything he said, but often the attempt to follow him was fun, and even the younger ones, even Justinian trailing wide-eyed behind, got glimpses of a large and exciting meaning which was as good as information; perhaps better.

"It may be that the true answer for what happened to our planet lies in ecology," he said, rather sadly. "You understand, my dears, I am speaking of the planet Earth, not of this planet. Man is an explosive force. When he is threatened, he blows up in every direction. As his social structures grew more complicated, he could not live side by side with the predators—with beasts of prey who menaced his livestock. He had to destroy these beasts of prey. Then came the turn of everything with sharp teeth which might be sus-

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pect. The coyote, for example, which might eat one lamb, had to be wiped out, even though ecologists showed that the coyote was worth his weight to gold to farmers because he maintained the balance of nature by eating mice which otherwise would swarm in great numbers. Naturally, with the coyote gone, the mice multiplied. This led to vast campaigns of poisoning with a nice, nonselective poison called 1080, for which there was no antidote, and while many mice died, so did many birds which preyed upon the mice, and so did any animal—cats or dogs—which ate poisoned mice, and so did deer which ate the poisoned baits, and so even did some men who ate the deer.

"Man surrounded himself with circles of death. Fear, hatred, and a maniac desire for security—as if security were the ultimate in happiness!—spread around him areas of devastation. And this, too, happened between men and other men. The hint of sharp teeth could only be met by campaigns of destruction, wider and wider circles of slaughter until there was nothing left. And all this in the name of security."

Jon, wrinkling his forehead, said, "Do you mean, *maestro*, that security isn't any good? Because, gosh, that's what all the work of the domes is for, isn't it? And that's why they're always telling us, 'Wear your masks' and 'Don't go outside without an adult' and so on."

Monsieur Bernstein nodded. "I know," he said. "It's the way the Committee has decided. I'm afraid my voice is a minority voice. Still, perhaps it won't do you any harm to hear me. And I think that security is a myth. If there were any such thing as being totally secure from all harm, life would end. Life itself is a never-ending struggle on the part of protoplasm merely to keep from collapsing into a puddle of water. Non, non! The only totally safe place is in the grave."

Conan Dalgleish, with his chin resting on his palms, said, "Maître Bernstein, are there any Indians left on the Earth?"

The teacher smiled wanly. "No, my dear," he replied, and Nick turned in his seat to glare scornfully at Conan. Anybody knew there wasn't anything left there but ash and craters and radioactive jungles, but sometimes the younger kids couldn't grasp the fact, particularly since they saw quite different scenes in their picture books, movies, and the three-vee theatre.

He had gone through that confusion, and had grown out of it. He knew that "Earth" was so much bunk, like the mention of something called "heaven" in some of the books. It was one more make-believe place, something the grownups used as an illustration of

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their own desires, something on which to pin more of their fears.

He said, "And what about *here*? Is that why there aren't any other people on this planet except us? Because of that ec—ecology?"

"We don't know," Monsieur Bernstein said. "We just haven't found out. Ten years seems to you youngsters like a long time, but when you're establishing yourself in a brand new place, it isn't much. It took us half that time just to get an economy going that would support us: the hydroponics, experimental gardening outside in various areas, power plant, tool replacement manufacturing, a thousand different needs. There are only a handful of us, and the planet is very big. In the past five years we've only begun to scratch the surface, explore a tiny fraction of it, just begin to find out something about its life and its ecology." He laughed. "There it is, again, that word. I think we must really devote some time to it. Let me see . . . you younger ones will have your reading lessons tomorrow. And you older children, suppose you read up on the subject in the Library and come ready to tell me what you think the ecology of our domes is."

He dismissed the class, and the children went off to the crèche for lunch. After lunch, the younger ones had to take their naps. O-Sato settled in the study corner with her slide rule, Jon went off to the observatory, Judith and Sally Firdusi decided to go the Library, and Snooky and Kamil Firdusi got interested in the chemistry set which occupied more and more of their time. Nick found himself deserted. He hunched sulkily into the big main dome and hung around near Air Lock One.

A man driving a scooter loaded with sheet metal yelled, "Hey, sonny, get out from underfoot!" Two men carrying a long section of plastic hose brushed past him, and one said, "Look out, kid. Watch where you're dreaming."

He strolled nearer the Lock, and a man taking wet-and-dry-bulb readings said, "Don't go out without your mask, buster. And not by yourself."

Nick turned away. Sonny. Kid. Buster. They were all so big, so sure of themselves, and so worried all the time. He was ready to snarl. He made himself invisible, as a child can, walking like a small lithe shadow along the edges of things, skirting all activity, until he came to the stores and wormed his way among the crates and boxes and containers. He came to the emergency air lock. He dropped his mask kit and his pill-pak. He spun the wheel and let himself into the chamber, and then went outside.

The earth, here near the domes, was dry and gravelly and crunched like sugar under the soft soles of

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his moccasins. He glided swiftly away, watching now for the real Enemy who might suddenly shout at him to return, or ask him why he wasn't wearing his mask. The air was thin and clear and invigorating, and he grinned with happiness thinking of the stale disinfectant smell of the mask which he had left behind. He slid over the edge of the ravine like a weasel, losing himself among the scarlet boles.

The ravine was nearly half a mile wide and ran on and on toward the distant hills, a great crack in the friable earth. It was not very deep, but it was alive. There was a different quality to the very air you breathed: it was spicy with the smell of growing things, with the pale blue fringe plant and the yellow flowers that drooped from immensely tall hairlike stalks, and the crisp little clusters of green and lavender like springy lettuces, and even from the smooth rubbery trunks of the fungus trees. Tiny winged things dipped and hummed and whizzed. No one could see him here. He spun round like a crazy thing, and galloped madly down the steep slope to the thread of river at the bottom, where jointed and armored worms swam in the pink mud-stained water.

All these things had laborious names given to them by the grown-ups, names like *Aquilegia* and *Chrysomelida,* which meant nothing. He and Judith and the others had given them their own names, their real names: Fringe Plant, Yellow Sneezer, Snappers, Snicket Bush, names which meant what the plants and creatures *were.* Sitting on his hunkers beside the water, he carefully tickled one of the snappers with a long grassy stem and laughed aloud when the thing whipped itself wildly back and forth, broke in half, and swam off in opposite directions.

He got up and stretched, hugely and comfortably. He strolled downstream, on the lookout for anything that might be new since last he had come here. All his bitterness was gone as if it had never been; he was in his own place, among friends.

The ochre-patched red fungus trees thinned and gave way to crosseyes, slender feathery things that clustered thickly about the water dropping their hard double fruit, each brown rind decorated with two comical white eyes. He pushed his way between their shaggy trunks and stopped short. A silver snake was feeding on the crosseye fruit. You had to be careful of silver snakes: their long beaks were full of sharp little teeth, and although they were timid they could give you a nasty nip. Jon had been bitten by one once, when he had tried to pick up the shining, handsome thing stretched out on a fallen fungus tree, and the bite had festered. The children

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had had to invent a story about his scratching his hand on a metal case in the store-pile.

Nick watched it, wishing there were some way to tame it. His hands itched to take hold of that many-legged, smooth-muscled thing, to stroke its odd, funny head and its glistening blue-white scales.

Softly, he picked up a couple of crosseye fruits and began edging forward. The snake saw him and drew back upon itself suspiciously. He crouched and held out his hand with the fruit balanced on his palm. With tiny, inching steps he moved himself closer to the beast.

The creature crooked back its head on the delicate neck, and cocked first one bright eye, then the other, at the hand, the fruit, and the boy. Suddenly, from above, came a flap of wings that set the fronds of the trees rustling; with a flash of scales the snake shot into the water and vanished downstream. Nick dropped the fruit and stood up, gaping.

The thing that sat before him on the ground had a surprised face like the owl in his natural history book, with great round feathery eyes and a soft, downy body. Its upper limbs, with their wide sail-like wings, were folded in the attitude of a man raising his hands in astonishment; below them, a second pair of arms had small monkey-fingers that were clasped across its fat belly. Its legs were jointed backward so that it could sit on them as a mouse or a rabbit sits upright. It was no more than two feet high. Under the round eyes was coiled a black watch-spring tentacle, like the tongue of an earthly butterfly.

He had seen these things before, but usually from a great distance. One he had seen from close up had shot out its long tentacle and killed a kind of large snail; he had stepped out of hiding to see better and the owl-thing had flown away.

But this one seemed very tame. It looked at him impassively, turning its head from side to side, and then it uttered a soft chuckle.

Nick grinned. He stood perfectly still so as not to frighten the owl-thing, and he said, "Hello."

"Hello," said the owl-thing, and then made a ticking, chirping sound, "tk, tk, tsp."

Nick imitated the sound. "Tk, tk, tsp. Hello."

The owl-thing hopped a little closer. It burst into a perfect torrent of clucks, chirps, and ticks. Then it suddenly said, "Don't forget your mask."

Nick's mouth dropped open. He shouted with laughter.

At the unexpected noise, the owl-thing leaped back and sat quivering, its tentacle coiling and uncoiling nervously. But Nick choked down his amusement and stood quietly until the creature began to hop towards him again.

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Slowly, Nick lowered himself to the ground and made himself comfortable. After a moment, the owl-thing shook out its wings, furled them again, and seemed to settle itself too.

It held out one wizened hand and lifted a wrinkled brown finger. Nick snickered; it looked just like Monsieur Bernstein about to make a point.

It squeaked: "—!"

"Sure, I get you," Nick said, keeping his voice low and soothing. "You mean 'one'."

"One," said the owl-thing"—!"

"—!" squeaked Nick.

The owl-thing held up two fingers. "—! —!"

"Two," said Nick.

"Two." And once again came that elfin chuckle, a gurgle of the purest mirth.

And upon the very heels of that chuckle, capping it, echoing it, drowning it in thunder, came the crash of a pistol.

The owl-thing's body flew apart in a spray of feathers and black mist. Moisture splashed Nick's face and arm. The feathery body lay ruined among the crosseyes, one long wing splayed out like a broken umbrella, the delicate feet with their minute hooked claws stretching to the sky.

Nick's father came leaping down the slope, clutching his pistol, his face white. Nick stared up at him, choking, and all he could get out was, "Why—why—?"

His father grabbed him by the shoulder. "Are you all right?" he cried, his voice muffled by his mask. Without waiting for an answer, he yanked the boy to his feet. "Are you crazy? Don't you know these things are deadly? Poor old Doc Mirsky tried to pick one up—the poison from that sting— And you aren't even wearing your mask!"

"It isn't," Nick gasped. "Dad! Why did you— I was talking to it!"

His father shook him impatiently, furiously. "A damn good thing I found out where you were," he said. "How long have you been coming outside like this?"

"We do it all the time," Nick sniveled. "Ow! Pa! Quit it!"

"Quit it? I'll quit you! What the hell's the matter with you? Running around this place as if it was a backyard . . . a nice, safe backyard somewhere in Illinois . . ."

His voice broke. Tears came into his eyes. He stood for a moment holding Nick's shoulder, and then he gave a long sigh and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. He took an extra mask from his pouch and handed it to Nick. "Put it on," he said, in a gentler voice.

Nick was crying so hard he could barely see, but he took the mask and clipped it over his face. The sharp smell of disinfectant stung his nostrils.

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"I'm sorry, Nicky," his father said. "I was worried about you. There are so few of us. We've got to be careful. We're all that's left."

His fingers tightened on Nick's shoulder. "I didn't mean to scare you, son," he said, trying to smile.

Nick stared into his face with blurred and hostile eyes. Deep in his mind where no one could hear him, he said, *I hate you. I hate you.*

The big man holstered his pistol. "Come on, son, let's get back to the domes," he said. He reached out for the boy, but Nick cringed away from his hand.

A single feather, golden orange and bordered with red like the color of the fungus trees, clung to the front of Nick's coveralls. He picked it off and clutched it tight in his wet palm. *I'll be back again,* he said wordlessly. *I'll find some way.*

Then he went up the hillslope with the stranger, his father.

***Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot:* XXXIX**

THE WOMEN'S ABSOLUTE EQUALITY PARTY ELECTED its first President in 2482, and set out to take over all known planets. Ferdinand Feghoot, then Governor-General of Awk-k-k-kaw in the system of Aldebaran, was ordered to accept a Mrs. Taffypull Jihad as his "Instructress," to give her all aid while she indoctrinated the intelligent aviform natives, and finally resign his office.

Mrs. Jihad taught the Awk-k-k-kawians *exactly* how things were done back on Earth, not only in politics but in everything else. Her pupils were apt; and she soon informed Feghoot that they had elected a feminine President and Senate and a masculine Vice-President and House, that Absolute Equality was established, and that he must resign.

Feghoot himself arranged a great ceremony. With Senators and Representatives all on their perches, he presented the native President and Vice-President, who delivered splendid orations of welcome. When they had finished, however, the new Governess-General leaped to her feet in a fury. "Feghoot!" she cried. "Why were they using *two* speakers' stands? Why weren't they using the *same* one? It's *discrimination! There's a misogynist in the house!*"

"No, dear lady," said Ferdinand Feghoot. "They are trying to follow Earth customs. You told them time and again that on Earth we invariably have separate ladies' rostrums and gentlemen's rostrums."

—GRENDEL BRIARTON

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We are indebted to R. Bretnor for calling our attention to the following very human tale of the inhuman . . .

POLTERGEIST

by C. D. Heriot

THE ROAD CURVED SUDDENLY, but from where she sat on the gate Jess could see the dogcart approaching nearly a mile away. Strangers, she was sure, who would be visiting or perhaps staying at one of the farms farther up the valley. By screwing up her eyes she could just make out the driver, a woman and two smaller figures. Now the horse slackened to a walk up the steep, rough road. In a few minutes they would be passing her.

She hastily adjusted the crown of daisies, fluffed out as best she could her skimpy pink cotton frock, and began to sing. She bent her head so that the morning sun beat upon her copper curls. One hand rested negligently upon the grey wood, the other lay between her knees. Her feet, bare except for sandals, were crossed at the ankles and hung by their heels from the crossbar, half demure, half dancing. Her gaze was turned away from the valley and sought the northern horizon in what she hoped was an interesting abstraction.

They will come past slowly, she thought. The lady would see her first. 'Who is that pretty little thing?' she would say. 'Why, she is singing! How charming.' And then perhaps she will recognize the air. 'Just fancy hearing *Sur le pont d'Avignon* in a place like this!' By this time she would have had time to turn her head—one couldn't go on being rapt and not notice the noise of hooves and wheels. She would break off and smile shyly. The lady would smile back.

'What is your name?'

'Fiona MacIntyre.'

'How pretty!'

But the cart must have stopped. So the lady must have said to Cameron (she could see it was Cameron driving, now): 'Who is

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that pretty little thing?' and he would, of course, answer: 'Jessie MacIntyre,' which wouldn't be as good—but it might, after all, because the lady would say, 'How *does* she know French?' and Cameron would say, 'I don't know,' or perhaps not answer at all, and then the lady would catch his arm and say: 'Do please stop. I must speak to her.' And Cameron would stop the horse and look straight ahead with a resigned expression and the lady would say, 'Come here, little girl' (she wouldn't remember the Jessie), and she would say, 'Who are you and where do you come from?' And they would talk until the lady would suddenly say, 'Goodness, we can't stand here all day! Come to tea to-morrow.' Or even, 'Jump up. Wouldn't you like to be my little girl?' And she'd go just as she was, and it would all come right, and there'd be lots of sweets and lovely dresses, and she'd sing better than all the other girls at parties and everyone would say how lovely she was.

But the other children. She could see the other children looking at her over the edge of the dogcart. They would have to be—she urged that they would be—several years younger than she was. How she would love them! How they would respond! She could hear them whispering, with tight, thin little arms around her neck, 'We *do* love you, Fiona.' And what fun it would be when they said, 'This is our eldest sister Fiona—only she's not *really*,' and people would look at her with surprise and interest. 'She must be a remarkable little girl to have been adopted by that nice woman.'

The cart passed stolidly by.

She stopped singing and turned to look. The woman was dressed in greyish brown with a black hat. She had a flat, uninterested face. Two little boys with freckles and tartan mufflers stared at her. Cameron nodded without smiling. She watched them grow indistinguishable in the distance.

Then she got down from the gate and began to walk towards the valley. There was a man, quite old, on a bicycle. He saw her dancing alone by the roadside—no, in a field. 'What grace the child has!' he thought. And he was a doctor from England, not like old Dr. Pusey, but with a clean silvery beard, and he said: 'My dear Mr. MacIntyre, the child *ought* to have dancing lessons.' And she bowed and smiled and a little page brought her the hugest bunch of tulips and all the other girls clapped and weren't jealous at all.

At the bottom of the valley was the farm, her home. It lay in a pocket of the hills. Ash trees surrounded it and concealed the buildings at the back, so that it appeared smaller than it was. Its whitewashed face with its slate roof shone coldly through the grey-green leaves.

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Her mother was brushing the best-room carpet.

Jess looked at the fluffy grey heaps of tea-leaves and hastily put away the thought that they had a smell, a terrible smell. All day she toiled with broom and dust-pan, hating the smell, and everyone said how good she was, looking after her father and the children, just like a little mother—and so *thorough!* But her mother was alive and shining a little and asking her to go and see if there were any eggs, and to hurry before the rest of them got back from school.

She went into the stack-yard a little delicately because she remembered that she hadn't been to school for nearly half a term. Dr. Pusey said that she wasn't strong. How glad she had been at the envy of the others, and yet how sorry that she would miss the precious hours of French with darling Miss Young. School Inspectors might have stopped her and demanded why she wasn't in class. She would have been able to tell them the reason, or offer to lead them to her father or mother if they didn't believe her, and they would have been ashamed. 'Poor little thing,' they would have said, patting her head.

But of course she was better now. Convalescent. Only the dreams persisted, and those not every night. Jess's face tightened and for a moment she looked older than her eleven years. She ran round the cliffs of golden straw and began to search in the little gullies at the bottom where she knew the hens were fond of laying. After a few minutes she returned to the house with fourteen eggs carried carefully in her skirt. In the dairy she placed them precisely in a row on the stone shelf, touching each other, and then bowled the last from a few inches away so that the one at the other end tottered to the edge and smashed on the floor.

After tea her mother found out and there was a row.

Jess was sent to bed early for punishment. Her mother did not know that solitary confinement was no punishment. Jess lay flat on her back staring up at the cracks in the ceiling and the rocking shadows from the branches outside the window.

There was a face on the ceiling that looked away. It would be awful if it suddenly turned and grimaced at her. She would be brave. She would say: 'Who are you?' in a steady, level voice. But supposing the face said: 'I'm the Devil.' She would pray out loud and the face would have to go. An angel would appear, maybe, with a fiery sword—or, of course, they would hear her praying downstairs and come running up to see what was the matter. Was she ill? And she *was* ill—dying—and everyone was so sorry. And Miss Young cried when they gave her

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the little shell box with the green beads and the Indian silver bangles inside. 'Poor little Jess,' she said. Miss Young made even Jess sound sweet. But she wasn't really dying, of course. Not for years and years and years—until she was so old and beautiful, with a thin, delicate face and lovely white hair, and everyone said, 'Don't you *know*—that's the *famous* Miss MacIntyre!' Her singing made huge crowds clap their hands and shout. She stood, far above them, bowing just a little and smoothing back her skirts modestly until they stopped. 'Ladies and gentlemen, my next song will be *Sur le pont d'Avignon,* in French.' She had only to raise her finger and they were silent. She was strong. She was powerful. She could do anything. People said to her, 'Of course, *you*—can do *anything.*'

If she screwed up her eyes very hard and thought and thought, simply anything would happen. She could fly. She could make the ceiling fall down. If she stared for a long time at the cracks, it would happen.

She gazed upwards. The face blurred and changed. The clotted leaf-shadows fanned jerkily to and fro. It was like water running over the ceiling, or water circling round her—round and round, droning faintly in her ears. She was floating in it. Her body had no weight. Only her head rested on the surface with the rest of her rippling gently like seaweed in the current. There was a pain between her eyes—not a pain, really, but an excitement. And somewhere inside her head was a flame, coiling and twisting. She looked inside her head at the flame. It flickered slowly, and at the bottom, in the transparent part, was a face, a familiar face, the face of her dream, the face of the crack. She was not afraid of it now. She could do anything. Deliberately, inside her head, she leaned forward and blew out the flame.

There was a noise like a mouse and a triangular piece of plaster, about six inches long, fell from the ceiling onto her bed.

Jess screamed, but it was a thin, almost silent scream. It had happened! She had thought about the ceiling falling down and it had fallen down. She was panting and exhausted and afraid of feeling triumphant. What would her mother say? Of course she couldn't tell her mother what had happened. But there was the plaster on the eiderdown. That was real. She would have to say, 'The ceiling fell down,' and nothing more. The rest must be a secret between her and—who else? The face was spoiled now. It didn't look like a face any more. And that was funny because, of course, the Devil couldn't look down at her any more if he hadn't got a face to look with.

Jess went to sleep.

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The dreams came again, but they were not so frightening. Instead of coiling horrors dragging her down, a swaying presence leaned round her, strengthening her in the void. There was a feeling of support, of alliance. Formless, featureless as was her visitor, she would recognize and welcome him on his return.

A few days later she was again in disgrace. Miss Young, darling Miss Young, had come to see her—to see her favorite, her loving beloved. And in the parlour with her mother she had sat, talking away and almost not noticing the poor little invalid until the poor little invalid stood on one foot and pressed affectionately against her. Miss Young had said: 'Go and play somewhere else, dear, while I talk to your mother.' And Jess had hung around and around until her mother had said sharply: 'For goodness' sake, child, do as you're told!' Miss Young gave her a reproachful look and Jess had gone out, dragging her feet and banging the door.

She went into the kitchen slowly, without any definite plan, but the cat was taking no chances and slid out with an insulting glance. On the range-side was the huge iron saucepan with the supper porridge simmering, blowing little craters whose steam puffed at the feathery dried tidemark where some had been poured out. Right in the middle of it, trembling in the chimney draught, was a flake of soot, a tiny black signal to Jess.

It seemed amusing at the time to scrape the chimney with a poker so that more flakes drifted down, light as negative snow, to join the first. After that it became a game, so to regulate the downfall that it covered, evenly and completely, the entire surface. Thicker and thicker, blacker and blacker. It was no longer a game, it was a rite. This action of hers would compensate for the affront to the importance of Jess, and at the same time would teach the grown-ups that she *was* important. Jess's face was rigid and set, like that of a priestess. Suddenly she stopped and gasped and ran to get a spoon to stir the mess madly, guiltily. The porridge darkened and made no attempt to hide her secret. She stopped stirring and stood for a moment, then quickly washed the spoon and put it away. Next she leaned over the fire, reached up and gathered a double handful of soot, sprinkled it on the porridge and washed her hands. Her heart was beating fast. Her cheeks were hot, and she panted. She was wildly excited and, in spite of fear, triumphant.

They thought it was an accident until her mother saw the poker-scrawls in the chimney and Jess's soot-smelling, soot-ingrained hands. This time she was beaten.

And when the blue china plate was found in pieces on the par-

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lour hearth next morning she was beaten again. The punishment was held over until her father came back from market in the evening.

Hiccoughing with sobs she went upstairs to bed, conscious of the apprehensive awe with which her brothers and sisters gaped at her. She tried to stop crying in front of them, but it was no use, and when she was at last alone she gave way to her anger and grief, smothering her howls in the quilt.

At the back of her mind a train of ideas was, however, passing, detached from all this emotion. It had not been all her fault: well, then, she would show them! She had not touched the plate. She had not touched the plate—but she was a person who could make the ceiling fall, if she liked—and she would show them. With that cold stream of determination trickling through her mind she went to sleep.

Her mother and father had been in bed and asleep for perhaps an hour when they were awakened by the first stone. It went hurtling along the uncarpeted passage outside their room and rattled down the back stairs. They both woke with a start. There was dead silence for a few minutes and then a second stone bounced past their door. Mr. MacIntyre grunted ominously as he lit a candle and got out of bed. The passage was empty except for a chest of drawers midway between the bedroom door and the head of the stairs. On the other side was a door leading to the room which belonged to the three eldest children. At the end was a window and a narrow stairway to the attics where Jess, her young sister and the maid slept.

Mr. MacIntyre opened the door with caution. The candle shone upon a silent, empty passage. The other bedroom door was closed. He tiptoed to the end and halfway up the attic stairs. He could hear the maid's snores and sensed a rhythm that persuaded him the two girls were asleep. On the way back to his room he opened the other door. There was no doubt of it: his whole family was sleeping.

As he turned into his own room he heard a stone drop down two or three of the stairs to the ground floor. He found it—or what he assumed must be it—on the sixth step, a rough grey pebble, rather smaller than a walnut. He went down and through all the lower rooms, but the shutters were drawn and the door locked as usual. There was obviously no unauthorized person in the house—the dogs would surely have barked—and he and his wife were the only ones awake in it. He went back to bed, puzzled but not alarmed. It must have been a rat.

There was no other disturbance that night.

In the morning Jess was late for breakfast. Her eyes were red and

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gummy and she looked tired and cross. She fiddled with her breakfast until her mother, who would have been glad to ignore the events of the previous day, pointed out that if she continued to be naughty more violent measures might have to be taken. At which Jess began to cry so quietly that it was assumed she must be ill. Everyone remembered with a jerk that Jess was still convalescent. Her mother broke all rules by taking her on her knee, even before the table was cleared, and petting her back to normal.

The next few days showed signs of approaching climax. Jess slept heavily, without dreams, but with the feeling of having travelled far. And not alone. Her travelling companion was faceless and featureless, but familiar.

And at night, while she slept, there were noises. Two more plates were broken in the kitchen, no one knew how. Mr. MacIntyre had been up several times in unsuccessful search for the cause of the disturbances, and he was now more than puzzled—even a little frightened, although he explained everything to his wife as the work of rats. One night, pretending that he had the monthly accounts to do, he waited up with a shot-gun.

The fire was a red glow, ash-covered, before he left the warm lamplight of the kitchen and tiptoed up to the bedroom passage. He placed a small lamp on the floor and squatted beside it. The whole passage was faintly illuminated except at the end where the staircase to the attics ended in shadow. He heard the wag-at-the-wa' ticking quietly below. A board creaked, and after a long time an owl cried outside. He leaned his head against the wall and heard the dry caked paper rustle and a tiny patter of dried plaster fall behind. There was no other sound except the accepted, unheard snores of the maid and the dim, sleep-breathing in the rooms about him. He was tired and a little cold. Everything was normal. He would wait five minutes longer and then go to bed.

He blinked, and during the blink was aware of a disturbance in the shadowy air at the foot of the attic staircase. A bedroom slipper—Jess's slipper—slid round the corner into the passage. It moved like a little boat several feet towards him and then stopped. He rose to his feet and, as he moved, something light and metallic bounced down the lower stairs, followed by a crash that caused the floorboards to vibrate. The shoe lay where it was, looking innocent. He kicked it aside with the revulsion one might feel about toadstools, and hurried down the lower stairs. Five steps down he found a brass cogged wheel from a clock, an alarm clock, perhaps, but he did not wait to pick it up. Downstairs the kitchen meditated peace-

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fully. Nothing was disturbed. The front room smelt chill and stuffy as it always did, when he unlocked the door. Even the grasses on the mantelpiece retained their usual bloom of dust.

In a passion of frightened anger he roared up the stairs again. The pale faces of his family stared at him as he ascended. Almost unconsciously he counted them: John, Robert, Ronnie, his wife: they were all there. Upstairs the maid was sitting up in bed with young Alice standing by her. Only Jess was still asleep, still so soundly asleep that he had to shake her half-awake. Her eyes, unseeing, met his in a stare whose pin-pupils dilated suddenly in fear. She yelped like a small animal, and then began to wail ordinarily, like a little girl. For a moment she had seen the companion of her dreams, and the dissolving of his features into those of her father had added an extra horror. The more she thought about it, the more horrible it seemed, until she was gasping with hysterical sobs that had the effect of focusing for the time being all attention and alarm upon herself.

The next half-hour was an anticlimax of cups of warm milk, dressing-gowns and nervous giggles: Mr. MacIntyre's hastily constructed and almost apologetic story about rats was accepted by everyone. Even Jess, who gave him a sharp tear-stained glance from her mother's lap, was glad to believe it. And having made up her mind to do so, she was eventually able to sleep again and to wake late for breakfast, subdued and tremulous.

All that day she remained at home. Usually responsive to the slightest attention, she did not even notice her mother's watchfulness. Wandering about the farm buildings wrapped in a meditation so deep that she looked like a miniature adult, she was unaware of the constant, casual presence of her mother, whose placid face had the planes of its brows and the tension of its eyes tightened by worry into an expression almost predatory. Nothing was said, however. The family, back from school, made no remark. Jess's moods were nothing new, and for them her mother presented her usual exterior of amiable supervision.

Only at bedtime was the normal routine of the household interrupted. Jess was ordered to bed at an earlier hour than usual. She obeyed without any opposition. The family was mildly surprised to see Mrs. MacIntyre visiting her daughter's room as soon as she was in bed.

Jess eyed her mother as she approached. Neither spoke. For a moment a gush of apprehension contracted her heart, then she sat up and clung despairingly to her mother. She made no sound but

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sprawled tensely across her mother's lap, her face buried in a comforting woollen shoulder, her arms wrapped tightly round a warm, solidly upholstered bulk that in turn embraced and surrounded her with a soothing physical protectiveness. Gradually she relaxed. Gradually she became conscious of the little ridge of cloth-covered buttons at the back of her mother's dress, of the tiny wisp of hair that tickled her ear, of the individual pressure of fingers against her own back. She twisted round and met her mother's gaze, benevolent but blank. For a moment the thought that comprehension lay behind those eyes caused her own to widen. But reassurance returned. She couldn't possibly know or guess. And as she gazed back she was aware of a warmth and understanding in her mother's eyes. Not understanding of the thing that obsessed Jess at the moment, but a wide, cherishing, protective and supporting general understanding. For the first time in her short life Jess was actively aware of being loved, and in that same moment was herself flooded with loving. She smiled and clung to her mother again, her entire body aching with goodwill. Images of her brothers and sisters, of that hitherto impersonal shape, her father, of darling Miss Young, rose in her mind. How she would love them all! How kind she would be to everyone—how good! An excitement, an urgency to begin to love *now*, this very moment, possessed her. And then, cutting through the shafts of golden emotional light like a sword-blade, a grey statement, detached as a radio announcement: 'This is Jess being loving. Jess playing the part of—what was the name? Fiona—Fiona being loving. She is doing it very well.' Tears of humiliation and weakness ran down her face. She felt cold. It was all too difficult. Being Jess was too hard. Why should it be so hard to prevent all those other Jesses and Fionas from rushing in, when all one intended was to be the Jess one was—the ordinary (yes, ordinary) little girl?

Her mother had gently disengaged herself, was dabbing at the sodden eyes with a cool, clean handkerchief, and was replacing her between the sheets. 'There, now, dearie," she murmured, 'get off to sleep now and never mind. You'll be feeling better in the morning, don't fret.' Their eyes met again and Jess felt reassured. An apathetic decision to leave all her difficulties until the daylight was her last conscious thought before she fell asleep.

Then it began all over again. Hastening movement, coiling darkness, a vortex down which she swung, a sense of liquid resistance. She was swimming in a waste of blackness, and beside her, slightly behind her, swam her

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companion. He it was, surely, who supported her, who bore her down the long corridors, past the whispering that swelled and died and swelled louder again as it caught up with her. She saw it clearly—with the face (now so familiar) in its base. It burned brightly, far too brightly ever to be blown out by an effort of her own will. The face knew that and smiled at her. An intolerable irritation overcame her. It was the smile and the whispering. She felt that everyone was laughing at her. But she had power after all. It was wrong to use that power—she knew that perfectly well—but she was angry. Anger excused, justified the use of power. But not yet. She would give them all one more chance. She would make a great effort and move away from them. She would forbid them to follow. She drew back from the flame, out of herself into the blackness above. She felt sick and giddy, but the face was no longer visible. Only the whispering, grown faint and remote, still sounded in her ears. It was very cold. There were steps down. Draughts swooped at her through an open door and then it was warmer and she was standing still. There was a dim light somewhere and she instinctively moved towards it. She felt calmer. It was very still—so still that she looked again inside her hollow skull to see if the flame was still there. It was brighter than ever, and, as she gazed, a blanket of cold descended. Silence and the burning flame and the dead weight of coldness. She felt herself sagging under it. No one could continue to live in that coldness. She felt afraid. She, Jess, must live. She had power. She would command heat.

She concentrated. The flame lengthened and went out. There was a moment of absolute darkness. Voices rushed past her. She opened her eyes and recognized, as the walls and ceiling stopped swaying, that she was in the kitchen.

A lamp, turned low, burned on the table. In a basket near the range lay the cat. It stared at her with watchful benevolence. Its distended pupils drew her attention before she heard the needle-thin mewings. She knew then that the cat must have had kittens during the night. Cat and child exchanged a long glance. The cat turned its head first. Then it sat up quickly and leaped out of the basket, clumsily, as if it were exhausted. Jess moved her head to look at the half-dead fire.

On the rag rug smouldered two glowing cinders. As she watched three more fell, slowly, in a curve that cleared the fender. She smelt the burning cloth.

She knew, quite calmly and certainly, that she was responsible. The thing was happening because she had wished it. She it was who had the power. She had com-

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manded and her companion had obeyed. She knew that it was a power they shared. She had gifted him with power. But for her he could not have done this. She now knew also that it was he who had been responsible for the breakages, for the noises, for the fear and misery of the last few weeks. It was as if he had grown like a horrible plant from the seed of anger and self-importance within her own breast. Now he was strong. His power was equal, possibly superior, to hers.

For an appalling instant Jess felt utterly alone with her companion. Nothing else existed in a grey, freezing abyss. There was no help. Every living thing had turned its back and receded to infinite distance. She was entranced, turned to stone by the coldness, the loneliness, the distance whence life had vanished.

The cat had made no further move. It stood with legs half bent, its tail out, its spine drooping under the weight of its body. The kittens had become a shapeless huddle of grey fur in the middle of the basket. They had stopped mewing. Abruptly the cat got back into the basket and sat upright, its eyes fixed on Jess. It ignored the kittens squirming blindly round its paws and stomach. It ignored the burning rug.

Jess stood where she was. Her only movement had been to turn her head from the basket to the fire. There was a drumming in her brain, a sense of compression, as if something would presently crack and she would hear clearly again. It came. It was as if she was awake, fully awake, for the first time. A tiny smoky flame contorted the edge of a rag, twisting it and transforming it into sparkling, metallic tinder. She was aware of that and at the same time she was aware of the cat's protracted stare. Here was life—new life, as well—which accepted, quite unemotionally, its dependence on her. Nothing so personal as trust, yet not so blind as instinct: it was a tacit understanding that she would deal with the situation. The cat had gone back to its kittens in the basket. It was waiting—not confidently, since that implied an element of faith, but with a total certainty—for her to act.

An explosion of warmth took place within her. A stream of love, focused but not possessive, flowed from her to the separate warmth that belonged to a life utterly outside, yet parallel with her own. The cat was a mother, but not like hers; the kittens were its children, but not as she was a child. She could love in the knowledge that nothing could be given in return. She could love and be happy that there could be no recompense.

Jess remembered to lick her fingers before she lifted the cinders and flung them back into the grate. But they had dried before she be-

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gan beating the rug with her hands. She did not feel the pain until she stood once more in the silence under the lamplight and the observation of the once-more-recumbent cat. With the sting from her scorched hands came further comprehension. Though she would never be able to explain, she understood just where and in what dark shadow she had been walking. The knowledge shrivelled her self-possession. Her one gasping cry brought her parents hurrying downstairs. They found her kneeling beside the basket. She was not touching the kittens, but she was caressing them with her eyes. The cat was approving but preoccupied with washing her family.

Caught up to her mother's breast, a drowsiness overcame Jess. She was dimly conscious of bustle and confusion, of her father struggling into his coat to fetch the doctor, of the fire being replenished, of saucepans and shawls; but she was enjoying the warmth of a clear, placid certainty within that what had happened was over and done with, that there would be no more unexplained happenings, that the flame was out and the power dispersed. She was tired as if she had struggled against something and overcome it; but what it was or whether there had only been one struggle and against only one adversary, she did not know. It was not important now. She would be glad to get to sleep. And surely the kittens' eyes would be open before long.

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Mummy powder won't do, because mummies are only a few thousand years old; take a bit of coal, distill it properly, and the problem of your pale, thin wife will . . . But we progress too rapidly. See below for the details.

MR. MEDLEY'S TIME PILL

by Stephen Barr

MR. MEDLEY AND HIS FAMILY lived over and behind his shop, in the small town of Freem in Kent, England. On the shop window was lettered in gold, "Geo. Medley, Chemist." The remarkable part of it is that Mr. Medley *was* a chemist —amateur, ill-schooled, perhaps, but in his spare time more than a mere compounder and purveyor of remedies. He was a member of the noble company of experimental minds that includes Paracelsus, Boyle and Lavoisier. Spare time, though, was in short supply, either in, over or behind the chemist's shop.

On a certain morning in 1937, in late July, Mr. Medley sat at breakfast with his family. Taking them clockwise, and starting with Mr. Medley, they are: his daughter, Phyllis, fifteen, pink, overweight, dissatisfied—his wife, Lizzy, thirty-six, pale, thin, dissatisfied—her sister, Bertha, age unknown, and Bertha's husband, Walter, ditto, both dissatisfied—and finally the son, Tommy, ten, (too horrible to be described). The general dissatisfaction in this group—if one can aim an emotion —was aimed at Mr. Medley, who, they felt, failed them as a provider. He did not succeed sufficiently as a shopkeeper, he did not have enough customers and nor did he charge them high enough prices. They considered that he did not work long enough hours, or show enough gumption. Brother-in-law Walter in particular felt this. Walter was all gumption, though so far it had not got him a job, but he had expectations. The daughter, Phyllis, felt in addition that her father did not understand her. She was right—George Medley's family were one and all enigmas to him, and he disliked them with

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absolute impartiality. Not actively, for his mind was on other matters—they were merely an unpleasing background to his thoughts.

"Have another nice bite of kipper, do," said Lizzy to her sister Bertha.

"Well, I won't say no," replied Bertha. "Ta."

"'N I have another bun, Ma?" This from Tommy.

"You've had four and that's sufficient."

Walter wagged his head sagaciously. "You know, George my boy, what you ought to do is put in a marble-top counter in the shop, and sell ices. Like they do in the big chemist's at Sydmouth. Tract customers."

Mr. Medley looked at him vaguely for a moment. "Oh; you mean a soda fountain. Where am I going to get the spare cash for it? Money doesn't grow on trees, you know."

"Not around here it doesn't!" Lizzy said, with a thin sniff. "And you put that down directly!" she added to Tommy who had filched a bun. He obeyed her by cramming it into his mouth and putting it down that way. For an instant his neck swelled and his eyes bulged, empurpled—then everything subsided.

"Well I never!" commented Aunt Bertha. "The very idea!"

Phyllis stood up. "Have to go out," she announced.

"But you didn't hardly eatny breakfast!" her mother complained. "Just one egg and a cuppa, and no bacon!"

"I don't wantny bacon," said Phyllis. "Sfattening." She opened a compact and made a vivid cupid's bow on her small suspicious mouth. Her father remembered that when it came to sweets she ignored callories.

"And you're too young for make-up!" said Lizzy. "Speak to her, George!"

"Wipe it off like a good girl, Phyl," George Medley said, but his daughter snorted and flounced out. The small house trembled with her passing.

After another cup of tea—he would have preferred coffee but Lizzy was for tea—George went to the front and opened the shop for the day. Mr. Bolter, the postman, stuck his head in at the door shortly afterwards and handed George a couple of letters.

"Gointerbe*yot!*" he said, and left.

George glanced at the wall thermometer and agreed—it already said 78, and this is hot indeed for an English summer morning. By nine o'clock it had clouded over and looked as if it might rain, but instead, George had a visitor. Not a customer—they were rare in the morning—but his crony, Herbert Willet, veterinarian.

"Well well, George! How's the boy?" Herbert said. His tone of

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voice suggested surprise at finding George in his own shop. "How's the experiment coming?"

"Sh!" George said, and looked at the bead portiere behind him that led to the living quarters. "Not so bloody loud, Herbert!" He beckoned him over to his dispensing cubicle. "It's like this," he said softly. "This afternoon's Thursday, and I'm going to try it!"

"Good for you!" Herbert replied. "But what's Thursday got to do with it?"

"Have to close up early Thursday afternoons, Herbert. It's the law. Lizzy's going for an outing with the others and I'm supposed to stay here and do the books. Stead of which . . ." He closed one eye, and Herbert nodded conspiritorially.

"Hope you know what you're up to," he said.

"I'm only *using* one tenth of a minnim," George reassured him. "And *that's* been diluted one to a hundred *before*hand, see?"

"Well, when we tried it on that mouse, he just disappeared—pop. He's not come back, either."

"Aaah!" Mr. Medley took a lecturer's stance. "That's because a cat must have got him in the *future,* see? Now, if that hadn't happened he'd be back as soon as the drug wore off—which to you and me here in the present would have been *no* time."

"Then how'd we've known he'd gone, eh?"

"Easy," replied George. "He'd have bound to've moved, and he'd turn up on the other side of the room or somewhere. Maybe outside."

Herbert Willet looked very solemn. "That being the case," he said, "since the Earth's moved several thousand miles during the interim, he probably may not have been ate by a cat, and he's probably floating around in the middle of space!"

"Certainly not, Herbert," George said firmly. "When he comes back he comes back to the way things were when he *left,* and the Earth'd be right where it is now!"

"Then he'd be in the same place, too, and you couldn't possibly tell he'd been gone." Herbert was calmly triumphant.

"No, Herb," George said with suave patience. "No. *We* haven't been on the trip into the future, and he has!"

Herbert Willet shook his head. "Sbeyond me," he said, and left for his place of business.

After jejune morning and a tedious luncheon, the Medley family minus George went for their afternoon outing. The skies were halfheartedly clearing in patches, and as the charabanc pulled away, Herbert Willet crossed the street from the Elite Tea Shoppe where he had lunched, and entered the chemist's shop. In the back was a small scrubby and neglected gar-

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den at the end of which stood a hut with one window. George unlocked the padlock and the two men went in and closed the door. Here, and only here, George Medley was master of all he surveyed. It was his private, unofficial and secret lab. Lizzy was of the slatternly impression that it was used for storage.

"You know," Herbert said, as they sat on boxes by an improvised work bench, "you never did tell me how you got the Mummy Powder. Come on, George: tell us!"

"Aaah!" George smiled cabalistically.

"You must have robbed the British Museum," Herbert said.

"I only *said* it was mummy powder," George confided. "As a matter of fact mummies are only a few thousand years old, and you need a far, far older bit of life substance than that, I can tell you!"

"What is it, then? Mammoth? Dynosaur? Then you must've robbed the Natural History Museum, George."

George shook his head, and began to compound and form a pill. "Coal, Herbert: *coal*. It's the oldest organic stuff you can get, and coal's what I use. Leastways the stuff I'm after's in it, and I got it out by trituration, leaching and distilation. *There* we are." He picked up the pill. "Want me to make one for you so's you can come along, too?"

"No fear!"

"Well, reach behind you, Herb, and fetch that bottle of port out of that box—we'll drink to my trip, and I can use it to swallow the pill at the same time."

Herbert did as requested, and George poured two mugsfull.

"Jolly good health," he said, popped the pill into his mouth and drank the port. As he lowered the mug he looked out of the window at the tall weeds—which gave a slight twitch. At the same moment the sky became suddenly lighter, which was evidently due to a largish cloud disappearing as if it had never been there. George turned to remark on this astonishing fact to Herbert, but he seemed to have taken himself off. This was odd because George was almost facing the door and he hadn't seen him go. Perhaps he had dozed off for a moment—but it was unlikely as the mug was still in his hand. Then, looking out of the window again, he saw his wife, Lizzy, appear discontentedly at an upstairs window. She *couldn't* be there, he thought—and then realized the explanation.

But . . . but . . . things ought to be more different! He ought to be ages in the future—he didn't know how many years, but ages, anyway. Everything looked exactly the same: the house needed a bit of paint, but not any more than when he started on his timetrip. And there was the roller-skate Tommy had left lying on the

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path right where you'd trip over it.

He got up, replaced the port out of sight, relocked the padlock and went over to the house. Lizzy's narrow face had been withdrawn, and as he went in he could hear her moving about upstairs and humming. In the middle of the dining table was the folded copy of the *Sydmouth Advertizer* that came every midday, and George bent over to read the date: July 30, 1937. He had taken the pill on July 29, 1937—not much of a trip, it wasn't. Just one bloody day!

He glanced at the cuckoo clock, from which Tommy had long since torn the cuckoo: 2:15—yes; one exact day. Have to try again and use a bit more of the stuff, he thought, and sat down heavily.

"Who's there?" (Lizzy's voice, alarmed, and yet with an aggrieved whine) "Who is it?" A moment's silence, followed by footsteps and she appeared at the head of the stairs. "Why, however did you get back so quick, George?"

"Ran," he said, and pushed through the bead portiere to the shop. He saw that the front door was bolted, and decided to leave it that way. When he had to go out on an errand he always locked up as Lizzy maintained it wasn't her place to wait on customers. If he was so close-fisted that he wouldn't employ an errand boy, why that was *his* look-out. She had enough to do cleaning up and cooking and making beds and I don't know what all. Since everyone made his own bed, the cooking was of the slapdash-I-can't-be-bothered variety and the house dirty, it was hard to imagine what occupied Lizzy's time. Her voice came again.

"But you said you had to go up to the Hall with a bottle of medicine for Sir Humfrey, and it's a twenty-minute walk!" She was now downstairs in the back parlor, and came into the shop. "You *couldn't* have got there and back, so don't try and pretend you did!"

"I ran into . . . into Bolter. He was making a special delivery at the Hall and he took it for me." He pushed past her. "Excuse me," he said, and went into the back parlor again and took up the *Sydmouth Advertizer*—an idea had come to him. There was nothing new about it, but just the same it was a wonderful idea. Tomorrow's big horse race—or rather, today's—was Goodwood, and he couldn't lose! It was simply glorious, and he started for the garden and the privacy of his shed.

"And where are you going, may one enquire?" Lizzy said. "There comes a customer and the door's locked! I think he's got a prescription, so you come right back!"

"Open the door and tell him to leave it," George said, feeling light-headed.

"Well I never!" Lizzy said, and he heard her go into the shop as he

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walked out. Inside the shed he opened the paper to the sporting news and noted the winner—an outsider called Subterfuge, at twenty-to-one. Easy name to remember. He took out the port and had an experimental swig, and then put it back. No point in getting tiddly—he didn't want to miss anything. Funny thing, this—being twenty-four hours ahead of himself. He rubbed his face and realized he didn't need a shave. Of course not: he was only twenty minutes older than when he took the pill yesterday.

Beyond making a nice bit of change on Subterfuge he could think of nothing either interesting or advantageous that could be done. He looked at the newspaper again: "Japanese Bomb Tientsin." Well, that wasn't news—he'd heard it over the wireless yesterday. Still, what could you expect? It was a rare tomorrow that held any total surprises. Coming events cast their shadows before them, except in the case of a horse race, or maybe the Stock Exchange. George thought about that for a moment, and dismissed it. Stocks didn't go up enough in one day to make it worth your while, and besides he wasn't in London and he didn't have the capital. He had six hundred pounds in the bank, and when the pill wore off and he got back he'd take the train to Sydmouth and give it all to Johnny Glow to put on Subterfuge.

He got up and sauntered back to the house. From the shop he heard Lizzy's voice again, shrill with astonishment, shouting at somebody. "How'd *you* get around to the front? I just saw you go into the garden!"

"Climbed over the wall," a man's voice replied. The voice was strange to George, and yet it reminded him of someone.

"You gave me ever such a start!" Lizzy went on. "George Medley, you must've been drinking! Running about in the streets and climbing over walls!"

Understanding came to George, and he slipped out of sight as he heard Lizzy coming. He waited until she climbed the stairs and banged her bedroom door before he went quietly in and through to the shop. Standing by the dispensary counter was himself, or rather, his alter ego—George Number Two—tomorrow's Mr. Medley. He had a smug look.

"Hello, Georgie!" he said. George One realized that "Georgie" was what he would call himself—it was the affectionate designation of his childhood, and alien to his critical and disapproving wife.

There was a short silence. George (One) was accustomed to seeing himself in a mirror, but not to having the reflection exhibit a life of its own, and look *at* him, as opposed to look back at him. And talking. That was the rummest part—embarrassing too.

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"Makes you feel funny like, doesn't it?" remarked George Two. "Remember it from yesterday, or rather, from today—first time around. As you, that is."

George One looked at him uncomprehendingly. He felt more than light-headed—he felt like a clock whose alarm had gone off ahead of time.

"Well," George Two went on cheerfully, "now you've arrived I'll pop off to Perly Junction and collect our winnings from Johnny Glow. Six hundred quid at twenty-to-one . . ." He cogitated.

"But . . . I haven't placed the bet yet!" George One said.

"Course you did. Yesterday afternoon," George Two reassured him. "Right after you got back you slipped out and caught the two-forty. I went to the bank first, of course—or *you* did, if you prefer. 'T's the same thing, except I remember and you don't yet. You won't until the second time around—when you'll be *me*. Twig?"

George One nodded uncertainly. It was all deuced rum. "But is Johnny going to be able to pay off? That's a lot of money—twelve thou'—that's what it comes to. And why Perly Junction? Johnny's place is in Sydmouth."

"Don't worry about that now," George Two said, mysteriously. "I'll explain when I get back. So, while I'm gone you look after the shop, and . . . *her*." He looked up at the ceiling significantly.

"Where's all the others?" George One asked after a moment.

"That's right, you don't remember yet, do you? Well, Tommy's off with his nasty chum, Snapper Smith. Phyl's with her awful young man who's almost as old as us, and Walter and Bertha went for a walk by the river. That's all Walter ever does, isn't it? Goes for walks—for his constitution. Never get a job *that* way."

"Right," George One said. "Getting fed up with him, I am."

"You and I'll see about that," George Two reassured him. "Or rather, we—or, you,—*will* have, if you know what I mean to say." George One shook his head. "Well, it's hard to get the tenses right," George Two said.

The bedroom door could be heard to open and Lizzy's steps descending the staircase. "I'm off," said Teorge Two. "Let me warn you of one thing—when Walter gets back and you order him out of the house—oh, yes you will," he added, as George One's eyebrows went up. "You're in for a bit of a scene, chum." Lizzy's steps could now be heard in the kitchen, and George Two drew George One through the door onto the street to be out of sight in case she came into the shop. "Now, we know Walter—always boasting about how he's been promised a job. Well, go to the phone, *now*, and call up Tanner's and see if it's true. You'll find out why later."

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"All right," George One said, doubtfully. "But I still don't see why you're going to Perly Junction instead of Sydmouth."

"Aaah!" George Two winked. "It's on the main line to London and that's where I'll catch the train Johnny's going to be on!"

"George!" (Lizzy's voice from the shop.)

"Go on in!" George Two said. "I'll explain it all later." He turned away, and George One went in, feeling confused.

"Who were you talking to?" Lizzy asked. "I looked through the window and you were facing this way and then I thought you turned away and the other man came in . . . except it's you, all the time! Have you been drinking again?" She looked at him with wary suspicion.

"Certainly," George said recklessly. "And now if you please I'll use the phone." Leaving her open-mouthed he went to the back hallway and called up the firm of Tanner & Son, Drapers. He spoke to his acquaintance, Geof Thompkin, and asked if Walter was being, or was likely to be, considered for a position.

"First off," replied Thompkin, "old Mr. Tanner's in Brighton and no one gets taken on without he says so. In the second place we don't need nobody and in the third, if we did we certainly wouldn't take your brother-in-law Walter and that's flat."

George hung up thoughtfully. In the shop the door opened with a loud jangle and he neard his daughter's voice. "Hello, Ma!" she said with unnecessary emphasis. He pushed through the portiere, and Phyllis caught sight of him and screamed deafeningly. "I just passed you at the *bridge!*" she said, her eyes popping. "Snot *possible!*"

"Then it couldn't have been me, he replied reasonably.

"But you *spoke* to me! And you said to tell Ma to keep her shirt on!"

"Well I never!" Lizzy said. "That's a fine thing to tell your own—" She was interrupted by the entrance of her sister, Bertha, followed by Brother-in-law Walter. Walter was flushed from his walk and, possibly, by a stop-off at the Red Lion Arms. He hiccupped genially—the combination of lager and exercise is gasogenic. "Well-well-k, George my boy!" he said.

George barely noticed him. It had just come to him what twelve thousand pounds might mean, and he was suddenly confident that he was going to get it. Otherwise why had George Two seemed so gay? Obviously because he, George One, was later that day going to be told by George Two that success had crowned their bet, and then he would return to yesterday to continue as George *Two,* who would remember this—and be gay! Complicated, but clear when analyzed calmly.

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"And may one enquire," enquired Lizzy, "what you happen to be looking like the cat that ate the canary for?"

"Just ate a canary," he answered. "That's what."

His family gazed at him in consternation; and he addressed himself to Walter. "As for you," he said, "you can pack up and leave, I've had enough."

"Enough of *what?*" said Walter indignantly. The others stood in open-mouthed, temporary silence.

"Enough of you, so get cracking. I'm tired of giving you free board and lodging, and listening to you talk about your prospects. If you and your bags aren't out of here by dinner time my brother'll help me put you out. He'll be here in an hour." This seemed a good way of introducing George Two.

"You're drunk! Just like I said!" Lizzy asserted. "You haven't *gotny* brother!"

Walter mustered his gumption and stepped forward. "What's more I have got a job! Or, good as. With Tanner's—"

George Medley held up his hand. "It just so happens I called my pal Geof there, and I asked him about you . . . So there's no point in your lying about it. Bertha's Lizzy's sister, so she can stay—but I expect she'll want to go with you, God alone knows why. So, hop it!"

"But what ever made you call up Tanner's?" Walter said, stunned at such prescience. "I never told you I was going to . . . to . . ." Words eluded him.

"And *you*," George went on to his daughter—he ignored Walter, "go up to the bathroom and wash that rouge off your face!"

"Shan't!" Phyllis announced, and glared. "Besides, tisn't rouge! Slipstick!" She breathed heavily.

"All right then, *I'll* do it—with yellow soap!" George said, and advanced on her. She squealed—formidably.

She was fat, but he was a man, and washed she was. Her mother witnessed the unfair act, but she was powerless, though vociferous. Walter tiptoed upstairs—all gas and gumption gone from him—and was shortly joined by his wife. They packed hurriedly.

"Don't like the look in his eye!" Walter explained. "I'm not afraid of him, understand, but I think he's gone crackers!"

Downstairs Tommy and his young friend Snapper Smith had arrived. Intractable when apart, together they formed a syndicate of mischief. Snapper was perhaps the worse—the new-style, or Progressive-Education, child had not yet appeared on the scene, but Snapper and Tommy made prophetic samples.

"Snapper!" Mr. Medley's voice held a new tone, and the boy jumped. "Out!" Mr. Medley's thumb jerked towards the door.

Snapper essayed an uncertain

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sneer, and George raised a threatening arm. *Out!*"

"You touch me nile tell my Par!" Snapper whimpered. The elder Smith held a mortgage on George's little property, and this implication was in the air. But with twelve thousand quid coming who cared?

"You can go home and tell your father to . . . to blow his nose!" George said, and turned on his son. "And you keep away from Snapper, understand me? You're bad enough without him getting you into more trouble!" Tommy fell back behind his mother, and made the strategic error of imagining he could safely put out his tongue from this prepared position. Presently there were shrieks and tears and promises, whilst Lizzy, fruitlessly, attempted to intercede. Snapper slunk out, appalled. Tommy, damp and snuffling, repaired to his garret bedroom—Phyllis in like condition was already in hers, and in the kitchen their parents faced one another alone.

"George Medley!" cried Lizzy, "I'm going home to Mother!"

"I'm sure I don't know where you'll get the fare," George said. "She lives in North Wales, and that's a bit of a walk." He looked at the clock—almost time t'other George was back . . . with the twelve thou'. "Anyway, you always said you couldn't abide each other, so I suggest you go to the butcher's and get something decent for a change—my brother'll be here and he won't want your usual out-of-a-tin supper. And—" he said, as she eyed his purse, which he put back, "you can charge it."

She narrowed her eyes in frustration. "You've no brother and well I know it! And now that you've thrown my poor sister and her husband out into the street, there'll be plenty for whoever's coming! And it isn't out of a tin—it's boiled cod left-over, so there!" George remembered the threatened cod from Wednesday, and winced. When she did cook, Lizzy believed in cooking enough for several meals at one fell clip.

"He doesn't like cod, Lizzy, so do as I ask. It's only across the street, and you can get some prime Southdown mutton chops—they're easy to do . . ." His voice trailed off as he heard the shop door open, and a now-familiar voice call out, "Got it, Georgie!" He looked at Lizzy, whose eyes opened wide. Then George Two came through and into the kitchen, to stand beside his double.

"My God!" Lizzy said hoarsely, as she looked from one to the other. "Now I *know* you're drunk!" She was about to say more, when Walter, preceded by Bertha, and carrying a small trunk, came down the stairs.

"Well, Medley," he said, with sarcastic formality, "I'll say goodbye, and thank you for—" Then

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he caught sight of the two Georges and dropped the trunk. Bertha started to scream, and . . . George found himself looking out of the window of his shed at some tall weeds. The mug was still in his hand. He turned and saw Herbert Willet watching him expectantly. "Well?" Herbert said. He seemed slightly skeptical. "When's it going to work?"

"Did," George said, and put the mug down. "I don't seem to've moved, though."

"Never budged," Herbert said. He had an agnostic air, and George decided to keep his adventure to himself, and pass it off as a joke.

"Well, next time I'll have to use a bit more of the Mummy Powder, eh?" He laughed and got up. "I expect it takes more for a man than a mouse. Herbert got up, too, and they went out, George locking up behind him.

"Tootle-oo," Herbert said, and left, shaking his head and stumbling over Tommy's roller-skate. George went into the house and looked at the cuckoo clock, from which Tommy had long since torn the cuckoo—2:15—just time to get to the bank and catch the train for Sydmouth.

In the railway carriage coming home George thought over what had happened tomorrow. Seemed a funny way to have to put it, but there it was. Here he was George Two—or would be next afternoon—and he found he was hazily remembering something he couldn't be remembering. It was that business about intercepting Johnny Glow on the train on Friday at Perly Junction, instead of going to his place at Sydmouth. That part was all right, but he seemed to *remember* finding out Johnny's skipped, so's to avoid paying off . . . And that could only mean there'd been *another* first time around—and now he was going to forestall it by going to Perly Junction.

This was more than odd—it didn't make sense, unless . . . unless this way he'd altered the future—or was going to. Still, why not? If there was such a thing as free will one altered the future all the time, whenever we exerted our free will. But something retroactive must have occurred—or was going to occur. Perhaps that was all right—retroactive in the future—altering the past in the future. He gave it up: it was too confusing. One thing, though; Johnny Glow had given him a very open, straightforward look as he took his bet. That was a bad sign with some people.

He got home in plenty of time to do the books, and after supper he went to the shed and compounded more of his coal derivative, a lot more. When it got too dark—tennish, in England in July—he had a small swig of port and returned to the house and bed.

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Lizzy opened the door between their rooms, and harrangued him about inconsequentialities until he dozed off . . . Sweet Dreams.

The next morning was like others: Bolter appeared with the post and said, "Goinnerbeyot," and a manservant from the Hall brought a prescription for Sir Humfrey, with the admonition that speed was vital, and George made it up at once. For a merry instant he considered putting in a stiff dosage of the coal derivative—do the noisy old bastard good to wake up and find himself in the year God-knows-what. Cool off his nasty temper, it would, but he refrained.

After a normally disgusting luncheon, which he was too tense to eat, anyway, and after hearing his family discuss their plans for the afternoon, George set out for the Hall to deliver the medicine. When he got to the bridge he remembered the appointment with himself, and threw the bottle into the river. It was only a mild tonic, after all, and Sir Humfrey's household would be the better off if he were deprived of it. He turned and retraced his steps, to be greeted by Lizzy's "How did *you* get around to the front?" etc. He went into the shop, and shortly George One appeared, but this time it was no shock to see himself.

"Hello, Georgie!" he said, and thought how foolish he, George One, was looking—or had looked. The scenes that followed have been described; suffice it to say that when he left his alter ego at the door of the shop, he noticed with amusement his wife's look of sour disapproval in the window turn to incredulity as George One went in to her.

A few moments later he found himself passing Tanner & Son, Drapers, and through the window he espied Geof Thompkin, talking on the telephone—no doubt to George One. He waved gaily, and Geof Thompkin waved back—only to start and gape with disbelief. George went on, and at the bridge passed his daughter and her unsuitable suiter.

"Hello, Dads," Phyllis said mincingly, for the benefit of her companion.

"Tell your mother to keep her shirt on," George replied and continue to the station. Here, as we know, he forehandedly bought a ticket to Perly Junction—a matter of five miles from Freem, and on the London, Brighton and South Coast line. There he waited for the through train—a matter of twenty minutes. During the wait he noticed his friend Constable Tate passing by on the road on a bicycle—probably on his way home for tea. He hailed him and explained his errand.

"It'll only take a sec, Bill," he said. "Johnny Glow'll have the day's take on him, and he'll cough up my winnings the moment he

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sees you're with me. The station-master says they have a five-minute wait here so there'll be plenty of time. All you have to do is stand there."

The prospect of merely standing and, by his very presence, causing Justice to be done, appealed to Constable Tate, and Johnny, whose printed slogan was "Johnny Never Owes"—was constrained in this instance to live up to it. The three went their several ways: Tate to his tea, Johnny, much, much poorer, onward to London where he eventually became a captain in the Salvation Army and led a blameless life, and George Medley back by local to Freem. So, inevitably, History retraced itself—up to Lizzy's hoarse accusation of drunkenness, and the dropping of Walter's trunk. George then witnessed what he had previously missed: the sudden cessation of George One—and the result was decisive. Bertha fainted, and Lizzy was speechless.

It takes time, with a shock of this sort, for self-confidence and aplomb to reassert themselves, and it was not until after the quick departure of the in-laws that Lizzy found the words to express her deep resentment. "Well I *never!*" she said, with complete truthfulness. The unbelievable intrusion of the identical brother was bad enough, but his disappearance was an outrage, Yet, hold: on second thought it had surely not been he, but her own George who had done the disappearing. She stared at him closely—and there could be no mistake; the spot of ketchup on the tie, the button missing still from the coat, that she had put off replacing, every familiar detail told her that this was her husband. Everything except the look in his eye—and that was at once dominant and jaunty—not familiar at all.

"How about those chops?" said George, and she went.

George next closeted himself within his shed, where he composed a letter to Lizzy—the crab-apple of his eye—and another to his bank. The former explained that he was going away, that it would be idle to look for him, that she could in time divorce him for disappearance, that she would be provided for. The other letter requested the bank to convey his property, real and otherwise, to Lizzy, and gave the bank power of attorney. He then went out and posted the bank's letter, and returned and slipped the other into the tea caddy. With it he also put eleven thousand pounds Sterling—retaining one thousand as working capital to give himself a start in the future. It would be surely worth *something*, even though money had a way of depreciating over the years, and betting . . . well, that was a mixed evil which would always be with us.

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Then back to the shed, after a for-once quiet and delicious supper. And now he compounded not a pill but a draught, a bumper, of his elixir. Just as he was about to drink it a figure appeared at his elbow. He started, and saw that it was again himself, but this time dressed most oddly. Tie-less, and with loud shirt and knickers, the latest George gazed at him with indulgent amusement.

"Now, don't *you* go and faint!" said George-the-Third.

"What . . . what . . ." George-the-Present was nonplussed.

"Just thought I'd pop back and surprise myself," said the other. "And leave this." He produced a thick packet of currency. "Lizzy's going to lose most of that eleven thou' by trying to run the shop as a confectioner's, so we'll just leave this here and when she has to sell the place she'll find it when she comes over here to pack up."

There was silence for a while, and finally George, (our one), said, "How's it going to be in the future?"

"A bit of all right, old son! You'll see!"

"But how did you—I—get back? That's *reverse* time travel, isn't it?"

"Easy. Used a bit of meteorite, instead of coal. It contains an isotope of—"

"A what?"

"Oh, never mind—you'll find out. Anyway, I'm leaving in half a shake as I only took a little of the stuff. About three point one min- " He was gone.

George Medley picked up the packet of money, stowed it behind the port bottle and sat down. Through the window he saw Lizzy look out of the kitchen door, and sniff disdainfully at the universe. He shrugged, and drank his potion. And if you are young, and happen to live to a tremendously ripe old age, and go to the right part of England, you will find him—living in a vine-clad, plastic cottage with all the modern conveniences, and with his new wife who will be; not pale, not thin, not . . . But you've heard all that.

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A new adventure of a time-traveling friend we have met before. There are special reasons, as you will see, to hope that this will not be the last time we meet him . . . .

THE COUNTRY BOY

by G. C. Edmondson

SIT IN A SIDEWALK CAFÉ LONG enough and the whole world will walk by. Hah! A half hour had passed without one familiar face. I was glowering into a French beer, gaining a new insight into the Gallic preference for wine when someone sat uninvited at my table. "Feelthy peectures?" he asked.

It was my mad friend. I stared incredulously, then laughed. "You first," he said.

I shrugged. "A world power pays me not to talk." Not that there was any real secret. Millions knew IT was going to start a few days after the inauguration. This time America had selected the original Aw-shucks kid. His supporters gleefully described him as the ugliest president since Lincoln. They hinted he was more everything than the Emancipator. So far he was only uglier.

The other side of the world gave him ten days to snafu. Then they'd deliver the Ultimatum and he was going to muff it. I knew it; my mad friend knew it; so did everybody else. But, business as usual, so here I was for this crummy geophysical fizzle where I'd probably get mine an hour before the optimists who'd voted for the wonder boy.

My mad friend read my mind. "He can't be real," he groused. "So he was a doctor at 19. So he wiped out disease and lengthened the lifespan 20 years. But why, in his 35-year-old decreptitude does he have to take up politics? I say it's all done with mirrors."

"We'll know in three weeks," I gloomed. The waiter hovered.

"*Café,*" my mad friend said. He glanced distastefully at my bock. "Remove this urine and bring my friend a bottle of Münchener Löwenbräu."

"*Sí, señor,*" the waiter answered.

"No wonder that troglodyte couldn't understand French!"

"Refugee," my mad friend clar-

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ified. "It never occurred to you to try Spanish?"

"Never," I admitted. "But why do you endanger your sinuses in this rainwashed realm of international iniquity?"

"An extradition."

"A what?" The last I knew he'd been playing Great White Father to the autochthonous population of an Arizona town which only the threat of legal reprisals keeps me from naming. I could not imagine a Yaqui Indian in Paris. Much less could I imagine one being wanted bad enough to send my mad friend here.

The waiter returned with coffee for my friend and a potable, non-local beer for me. "*¿Los señores desean algo más?*" he asked.

"I desire to know why you didn't speak Spanish in the first place."

The waiter shrugged apologetically. "You look like a goddam."

My mad friend laughed. "Where did you ever get those tweeds?" he wondered.

But I was not going to be led down the garden path. "You mentioned an extradition—"

He saw what I was driving at. "I don't work there any more."

"What! Those ungrateful wretches turned you out as soon as you'd ticketed enough tourists to build a new jail and squad room?"

"Not exactly," he explained. "I went into business for myself."

I have heard of private investigators but never of a private traffic cop. "Did you buy up a stretch of highway or do you have the toll concession on Brooklyn Bridge?"

"Bring any women?" my friend asked with his usual mercurial change of subject.

I nodded. "I don't imagine anyone would foot the bill for your harem as long as it's an extradition matter."

"You're so right," my mad friend agreed.

Two furtive men in shabby overcoats sat down at the next table. Without asking, the waiter brought a half bottle of Valdepeñas to one and something which looked like cider to the other. They began a political discussion in Catalán.

"This seems to be a Spanish Republican hangout," I said nervously.

"It is," my mad friend admitted.

"Shades of McCarthy!" I exclaimed, "I'll be investigated!"

"Relax," my friend said. "Have another beer."

"You know they're harmless and I know it but do the hatchet men?"

"What hatchet men?"

"That scientific congress. I'm supposed to know Secrets."

"Do you?" my mad friend asked.

"That's beside the point. Hired

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assassins have their job and they're singularly unimaginative about doing it."

"If I'm not mistaken," my mad friend said, "here comes one now."

"How would you know?"

"He flashed his tin in the consulate when I was there yesterday."

The man who approached our table was definitely not the FBI type. He was of medium height, with a nondescript, faintly Byzantine look, and splendid teeth which his dark skin made even whiter. He wore a trench coat and *boina,* which is cut so like a beret that only a Spaniard recognizes the difference. Accompanying him was a rather attractive Mexican girl, wearing what I guessed was the new botch look. The mere thought of its cost made me acutely unhappy.

"Look who I've found!" she said, then did a double take as she recognized my mad friend.

"How many wives did you bring?" my mad friend asked.

"Just this one." We made room at the table and the waiter reappeared.

"*Avez-vous une Coca-Cola?* the girl asked.

"He speaks Spanish," I said.

"You want I should ask for Tequila already?"

My mad friend sighed and inspected the man in trench coat and *boina.* The Byzantine stared back. Without looking, he took a glass of cognac from the waiter's hand and tossed it off. "I know you," he said.

The last time I'd seen him he was resplendent in a Mexican cavalry officer's uniform. The time before that he'd spoken archaic Sephardic Spanish. Now he was speaking English. "Are you really an FBI man?" I asked.

"Want to see my papers?" he tossed them on the table.

"They look real," I conceded. "Except these say you're a native American. Last time I saw you, you were born in Istanbul."

"Dear me," he said, switching momentarily from American to British. "In those days I drank more than I should."

"Getting in the FBI would be easy," my mad friend said. "If I believed in time machines."

One of the Byzantine's little quirks was that he did. From what I'd been able to guess he wasn't born an American and had never stood still long enough to acquire citizenship, save in Istanbul. And since he wouldn't be born there for another 300 years, that could lead to complications. But how easy, with a time machine, to materialize at midnight in some courthouse and doctor a birth record. Ditto with the yellowing archives of the little red schoolhouse up to the big, carefully non-red university. I looked at the man in the *boina* and suddenly laughed.

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"What's so funny?" the Mexican girl asked.

"I imagine," the Byzantine said in his archaic Spanish, "that he's visualizing the situation in an office which had too many desks one morning. Hawkshaw greets everyone as though he'd been there for the last nine years. There would have been much innocent amazement on one hand and furtive checking of records on the other. But everything was there: vouchers and cancelled pay checks for nine years, dossier in order. And when Himself had gone through his own sealed files and read glowing semi-annual efficieney reports signed in his own hand—" The Byzantine shrugged.

"They occupy sensitive positions," he continued. "It would never do to flap off to a psychiatrist over a little lapse like not remembering the man at the desk next to yours all these years. If such a thing ever got out it might undermine public confidence in the Department."

"This is the kind of thing you should write," my mad friend said.

"Who'd believe it?" I muttered.

The Byzantine tossed off another cognac. Abruptly, he stood and, excusing himself, disappeared in the general direction of the men's room.

"About this extradition," I probed.

My mad friend drew himself up magnificently. "I am now police chief of Speedtrap, Ariz.," he said.

"There ain't no such town," I protested.

"You want to see *my* papers?" He tossed an open billfold and an extradition warrant on the table. Again, they looked entirely too real. "Go over the seal with a low power microscope and you'll find we incorporated only two months ago," he volunteered.

"But actually to christen a town Speedtrap?"

"Desert rats have a perverted sense of humor. Something to do with the vitamin content of Gila monster."

It couldn't be the booze, I decided, for my mad friend has not touched the stuff since a certain experience in North Africa. . . . But the FBI had returned from a *pissoir* somewhere in the café's subterranean portion. He had a 10° list to starboard.

"It may be impolitic to mention it," my mad friend said, "but you once told us your only trip to the past had created havoc by planting antibiotic-hardened microbes back where no one had any immunity. Wasn't once enough to make you swear off?"

The Byzantine looked about with exaggerated caution. "Who said I had a time machine?"

"You did, winter before last."

The Byzantine looked at us suspiciously.

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"You were eating pancakes in the only decent steak house in Nogales," I reminded.

"And as I recall," my mad friend contributed, "you were going to be 40 about now. There was conjecture as to whether you'd make it."

The Byzantine showed teeth in a dazzling renewal of confidence. "Things have changed," he said. "I may live several more years."

"That's heartening. I was afraid you had timed your career to end about the time the world did."

The Byzantine made a nervous hair-patting gesture and knocked his *boina* askew. Before he could lower his hand another cognac was thrust into it. The smile returned. "Can you keep a secret?" he asked.

"He," my mad friend said, pointing at me, "is already overloaded."

The Byzantine made a dog-bedding-down-in-high-grass movement. I hoped his story would be better than the last he'd tried to foist onto me.

"When I discovered," he began, "that the world would end in 1960 my initial reaction was an *On the Beach* syndrome. Then I thought, why not tamper again? My own world was gone and yours headed for destruction. What could be lost?"

"What indeed?" my mad friend wondered.

"But there remained the question: Whence the fatal spore which grew into that planet sterilizing mushroom?"

"Wasn't that obvious?" my mad friend asked. "Your alleged world was unified, prosperous, and pan-Christian some three or four hundred years hence, until you unwittingly planted the plague in 562 AD."

"Sharp," the Byzantine said in English. "But you forget." He lapsed into Spanish again and I noticed his Sephardic tendency to convert 's' into 'esh' was growing stronger. "There is only one time track. When I created this world I destroyed my own. My problem now was to go back and find the focal point which started man off on atomic research."

"Well, obviously you didn't scrag Einstein in his infancy," I said.

"Pointless," the Byzantine said. "There would still have been Rutherford."

"And Cavendish."

"And Curie."

"And Democritus."

"Heretics all," my mad friend growled.

"You might have started with Thales of Miletus," I said.

The Byzantine spread his hands in a helpless gesture and the waiter thrust a cognac into one. "Somewhere in history was a beginning—a nexus point whence all atomic research must

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stem. I visited many civilizations."

"Babylonia?" my mad friend asked. "Those temples were to get closer to the sun. If you walked E down the main street of one of those towns you went up a ramp right to the top of the ziggurat."

The Byzantine looked at him uncomprehendingly.

Wearing a look of impossibly eager innocence, my mad friend pointed at me. "The man from the Saucer Works says launching ramps should always face E to take advantage of rotational velocity."

"You were looking for a nexus," I reminded.

"*Ah sí.* By now I knew the time machine a little better and could flicker at the low edge of visibility. Also, I had enclosed it and carried my own air. I always drenched it with disinfectant before going back, and thus caused no new plagues."

"But the nexus?" I insisted. "Where did atomic research begin?"

The Byzantine gave an eloquent shrug. "There is none," he said. "It seems to be an inalienable part of your civilization."

I was annoyed. "You seem singularly carefree for a man who's going to travel beyond Saturn without a space suit any day."

"I am," the Byzantine said. "I don't believe I'm tampering when I tell you that all is not lost."

"I shall light a candle for you," my mad friend said.

"When I was convinced that nothing short of destroying the human race could prevent it from annihilating itself, I began sleeping in a foetal position. Then curiosity came to my rescue. Although he was no longer in style, I decided to find the Missing Link."

My mad friend began mumbling an exorcism.

"Did you find him?" I asked.

"No. The machine's range is limited to thousand year jumps. By the 3rd jump Byzantium-New Rome-Constantinople-Istanbul—the polynomial city of my youth had shrunk to a trading depôt inside a log stockade."

"1000 BC is a trifle late for missing links," I ventured.

The Byzantine nodded and made that nervous gesture which knocked his *boina* askew again. Before he could lower his hand the waiter thrust another cognac into it. "Some Phoenicians were pouring blazing pitch down onto a band of savages. The savages were howling antisemitic slogans as I flipped the switch."

"Never sell this one," my mad friend muttered.

The Byzantine turned on his chalice-poisoning smile and permitted the interruption. "*¿Por qué?*" he asked.

"You've got a time machine. You go back and back and nothing happens. So what?"

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"So the next jump," the Byzantine continued, "also nothing happened. The Golden Horn was still there but wider and shallower. A frigid wind made me suspect the ice cap lay not far N of the Caucasus. One look told me the Phoenician subdivision was yet to come. It also told me something I should have thought of in the first place: that, though excellent for *viajes temporales,* the time machine was useless for geographical voyaging."

"A plumber never brings the right wrench," I sympathized.

"Nor did I," the Byzantine agreed, "I went back, wondering what changes I had inadvertently caused."

"The Bomb and the Ultimatum are still with us," my mad friend groused. "You didn't change that."

"My germicidal precautions were satisfactory and, remaining virtually invisible, I startled no one into flapping up a new religion."

"The Missing Link," I pressed.

"Still missing."

"Anyone," my mad friend pontificated, "who would make such a statment is abysmally ignorant of contemporary politics."

"And religion," I added.

"I'll get to that later," my friend retorted.

"How big is this time machine?" I asked.

Again the Byzantine unveiled his skatophagous smile. "Too small for a Land Rover. Thanks," he continued, "to my FBI connections, I acquired a nuclear powered, folding back pack copter—one of those new ones with silenced ramjets so as not to apprise the enemy of his impending vertical envelopment."

There had been hints of this gadget at the Saucer Works but the Byzantine had apparently anticipated even the Russian version of Popular Mechanics.

"It was a tight fit but after dousing it with germicide I milleniskipped five thousand years back past the previous stop."

"Which put you approximately 7000 BC," my mad friend surmised.

"*Al grano,*" the Mexican girl suggested; "let's get to the point."

The Byzantine was unruffled. "If I did not find the Missing Link, I contented myself that I had discovered Eden.

"The ice cap had shuffled half a hundred leagues backward in its agelong waltz across the northern hemisphere. My many-named homeland was wooded, but no longer frigid. There was a difference which I felt immediately. It was like that *frisson* which comes on first reading Homer—on finding oneself transported beyond the dawn where the air is still unbesmogged and the gods have, perhaps, created man but have not as yet gotten around to inventing sin.

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"The forest was shaggy, like your unmanicured American woods, but five thousand years newer than Troy. The Golden Horn was chocked with reeds and roofed with a milling mass of screeching waterfowl. There was a cry which repeated endlessly—some sort of crane, I suppose, but the spell of the moment made me expect something between man and goat to step tootling from the reeds. But if Pan was born, he was not present that day."

"Another theory shot to hell," I grunted.

The Byzantine shot me an inquiring look.

"According to his theory," my mad friend said, "Europe was overrun by Bushmen or, as we of the Hibernian persuasion call them, Firbolgs."

"*Ah sí.*" *Leprejón* was the nearest the Byzantine could approximate to the trumpeted Gaelic vowels.

"A relict of paganism," my mad friend said disapprovingly.

"Also extinct, save in the Kalahari."

"We don't live in South Africa," the Mexican girl said.

The Byzantine lurched abruptly to his feet and made for the *pissoir*. More unsteadily than last time, I noted.

"This Speedtrap, Ariz., jazz," I prodded. "If you're so newly incorporated, how come the extradition?"

"We couldn't afford a large municipal payroll so the offices of auditor and treasurer were combined."

"Oh gad!" I muttered. "Say an Ave Maria for the traditional checks and balances."

"R.I.P. would be better," my friend conceded. "It was all checks and no balance."

"You're here to recover the municipal funds?"

"If she hasn't spent them."

"She?"

"If I hear it again I'll shout soprano but, in Algonquin, Polynesian, or Baluchistani, I *cherche* for the woman."

The Byzantine returned. His roundabout progress brushed him against the table where Catalán revolutionaries still conversed. They glanced up and lapsed into silence. A moment later one got up and left hurriedly without paying the check.

"Where was I?" the Byzantine asked, sitting down and giving us a fuzzy look.

"You had just discovered that the Golden Horn was populated neither by Bushmen nor Pan."

"*Ah sí pues,* I left the time machine beneath an oak, perhaps a hundred meters from the water's edge, and turned on its radio beacon. Then I unfolded the copter. It went together like an erector set, all with wing nuts. Guaranteed to assemble without wrenches in less than ten minutes. Two

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hours later I was finally heading NW."

"Exactly opposite from where I'd have gone," my mad friend observed.

The Byzantine gave a faintly superior smile. "I was familiar with the parking problem in Babylon," he said. "I was looking for a country boy."

"NW of Istanbul," the Mexican girl mused, "would be somewhere in Germany."

"The Neander Valley, to be exact."

"The plot agglutinates," my mad friend said unenthusiastically.

"Why not take the time machine along and save a trip back?" I wondered.

"The power comes from a connection in a basement workshop in a New Rome suburb which will never exist. Moving it might pull out the plug."

My mad friend sipped coffee and stared morosely at the table vacated by the Catalán.

"The trip was uneventful. The climate was slightly balmier than nowadays. Europe had not been logged off but the Carpathian Alps were still mountains and the Schwarzwald was still the Black Forest."

"Full of elves making Volkswagens?" my friend baited, but the Byzantine did not rise.

"Stilt houses in a few lakes were inhabited by brown-skinned burrheads whom I took for Cromagnons. I pushed on in my search for a real country boy."

"To Neanderthal?"

"Empty."

My mad friend looked up incredulously.

"He had been there but a raid, a plague, a bad winter, had come. Ashes in the caves were several years old."

Someone collapsed in the table's single empty chair. I glanced up and recognized one of my mad friend's wives. "I thought you didn't bring any," I exclaimed.

Ignoring me, he whipped the warrant from his pocket and proclaimed, "I arrest you in the name of the people of Speedtrap, Arizona."

"Does that mean we have to go home?" his wife asked.

"Probably take another couple of weeks to arrange passage," my mad friend answered.

"Is *she* the embezzling treasurer?" But the Byzantine was talking again.

"Being at loose ends, I decided to go up to Schleswig-Holstein and see if it was true about the amber traders having a marine railway across the isthmus so they wouldn't have to sail around Denmark."

"Did they?" I asked absently. I wanted to question the newly arrived wife but she was deep in a discussion of the other wife's new botch look.

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The Byzantine spread his hands. "I never got there," he explained. "The booklet clearly stated that the copter could be assembled without wrenches but hand-tight was not tight enough. I fluttered along, tightening first one wing nut, then another. Somewhere between the Elbe and the Oder, a dozen loosened simultaneously. I decided to land and bang them all tight with a rock. I had nearly reached the ground when one flew off and I found myself holding things together with one hand.

"Miraculously, the glide flattened. I progressed nearly a half kilometer into a box canyon before the second nut dropped off. I was moving slowly now, only a meter above ground, but I was frantic for fear the rotor would be damaged unless I could stop its windmilling. After another hundred meters of hoppity-skipping through a bramble patch I made it. The jet pods were less scratched than I.

"It turned visibly darker as I merthiolated the worst of my scratches. It was late summer from the looks of the berries, so I wouldn't freeze. I couldn't hunt for the wing nuts after dark so I decided to build a fire to keep away whatever carnivores lurked nearby.

"I realized next morning that those last hundred meters had taken more out of me than was apparent at first glance. But the Trinity of my youth still looked after its own for, though I had built no fire, I was alive and, despite numerous aches, could walk.

"After breakfasting on a Hershey bar, I started back-tracking for my missing wing nuts."

"Talk about needles in haystacks," I grunted.

The Byzantine smiled. "I had a pocket radar which would make a solid pip whenever I got close to that much metal." He stuck out his hand and the waiter immediately filled it. "It wasn't until I had retraced my glide through the briar patch that I saw the tracks and thought to load my Mendoza-McGirr.

"Oh, you don't have them yet," he remembered. ".25, with a triangular plastic cartridge. The slug is a gob of contact explosive."

"Nice thing to carry around in your pocket," my mad friend observed sardonically.

"The explosive is inactive until the propelling charge compresses it through a choke bore," he explained. "But even with a Menmac I was not eager to round a bush and face a bear large enough to leave these tracks.

"I proceeded slowly out of the canyon with one eye on the scope and the other carefully peeled for the berry-eating bear. Crossing a mud creek-bank, I learned my bear walked on two feet and was accompanied by several smaller

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bipeds. I came very carefully out of the brambles, through low scrub timber to a meadow where I caught a flicker of motion in the distance.

"They were big, tangle-haired, and naked. The meadow was a half kilometer across and perhaps twice as long. I was torn between a desire to see these things up close and to continue searching for my missing wing nuts. I was distinctly worried by now for the radar's metal readings hinted that any natives who settled here would exist in a permanent stone age. Resignedly, I started around the meadow.

"Dodging from tree to tree, I came within fifty meters of them and squatted behind a log. They were big, heavier than a Russian wrestler, and, stretched out, would have been as tall as a Texan's story. But they crouched like apes and this made their arms seem longer than a man's.

"Sparse reddish hair covered the males' shoulders and chests. It ran down in a bristling line to a tuft which nearly concealed their masculinity. Both sexes had long yellow hair which streamed in a tangled mass from their skulls. This convinced me, even more than the flints they carried, that they were not apes. Uglier than usual they might be, but these things were men.

"They poked along, moving toward me. The big male grunted mightily as he strained at a rotten log. Two females joined him and they turned it over. Females and cubs made eager clucking sounds as they scrabbled for beetles. The boss male sucked a snail from its shell while half-grown bucks watched from a safe distance and perhaps dreamed of a day when they'd be bigger and the boss older. But his stiff beard betrayed no grey and it would take a long fang to reach that throat.

"Minutes passed while I lay behind the log watching them, wondering what sort of necklace the boss was wearing. It didn't look like the shell and acorn strings the others had.

"Suddenly there was a 'whuff' as he stood, little eyes glaring suspiciously toward me. I could see now what the necklace was. He was wearing my wing nuts!

"He made sounds which might have been language and his subjects scurried away while he bared teeth and made threatening gestures at me. One young female carried a baby which couldn't be more than a month old but, instead of disappearing like the others, she put the baby down some distance back and returned to join the male. I wondered if she was curious or had decided I'd be an easy kill.

"I faced several possibilities—all unpleasant. Either I got the wing nuts from around his neck or I would have to walk across

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Europe. Something in his attitude told me now was not the moment to dicker. Even if his mind had been capable of entertaining notions of trade, what had I to offer?

"A neat problem in morality: Had I the right to kill a man merely to save myself a long walk home?"

"There was," my mad friend suggested, "the moot point of whether you could survive the walk. It might have been as simple as your life or his."

"That occurred to me," the Byzantine said soberly, "but I did not consider it valid for, as long as I had my weapon it seemed possible that I might eventually return to New Rome with little more than blistered heels."

"You considered these problems in a calm, detached manner while this ogre glared at you?" the Mexican girl asked.

The Byzantine smiled. "One can consider an amazing number of things in an instant. However, an instant was all I had, for the 'ogre' carried a crude flint blade and was stalking me like the Sicilian Avenger in some third rate melodrama. I made a threatening motion with my pistol. He and the female who advanced with him ignored it. I suspect threats would have been useless, even had he known what a pistol was.

"By now they were too close for the obvious tactic of blowing a house-sized hole between us. Also, if I frightened them I'd never see those wing nuts again. I retreated, walking slowly backward while they continued their inexorable advance. Soon it became obvious that I could not backpedal as fast as they could aggress.

"A moment later I also learned I could not run forward as swiftly as their shambling lope could close between us. They were scarcely four meters behind when I cast moral scruples to the wind and turned."

"Oh gad!" my mad friend groaned.

The Byzantine looked knowingly at him. "Quite," he said. "Those bullets were not meant to detonate that close to their user.

"From the sun I should guess it was well past midday when I came to and picked myself from the meadow's sawlike sedge. I ached in every joint and my ears rang like a carillon. I had lost considerable blood through the nose.

"There was nothing of the male, save bits of bone and hair. The female had been blown clear but something—it looked like the male's mandible—had gone through her chest.

"Of my wing nuts, there was not a sign. I fumbled through my pockets and found the radar which, thanks to potted circuitry, still worked. Hours passed before

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I had recovered the nuts. I pried one from the bark of a Norway pine over 100 meters away. Then I came back to complete the more gruesome part of my task. The indicator had shown metal embedded somewhere inside the female.

"By this time my ears had stopped ringing and it appeared that I would someday hear again. I removed the final nut from a corpse now advanced in rigor mortis and was about to go reassemble the copter when I heard a faint wail.

"I had subconsciously supposed the rest of them had taken the baby. They hadn't. It had lain wailing and starving in the grass all this time and only now was I beginning to hear it."

My mad friend smiled approvingly. "As Arthur Miller once observed, a play always tells how the birds came home to roost."

"Exactly," the Byzantine agreed. "Having murdered his parents, what were my duties to the offspring? For in spite of all extenuating circumstances, I could not help thinking of it as murder.

"My rations contained neither milk nor pablum. I tried making baby food as primitive mothers do, chewing a mouthful thoroughly, then feeding it to the child. But he was too young to swallow semi-solids. I carried him back, listening to his gradually weakening wails while I struggled to reassemble the copter. Several nuts had been damaged and it was only with a great deal of hammering that I got things back together.

"Nevertheless, two hours later I was back at the time machine and a microsecond after that I had returned to an era where bottles and formula were available."

"And now the real problem," I suggested.

"Did you baptize him or give him to a zoo?" my mad friend asked.

"After a week it became obvious to both of us that I was not a fit mother. He seemed perfectly normal but he most assuredly would not be when he grew up. Could I wish him onto some childless couple and break two innocent hearts?"

"Wouldn't he die anyhow when he got a whiff of modern, antibiotic-hardened germs?" I asked.

"That too occurred to me but I could not take the easy way out. And then, I was curious. Wolf children, you know. What could this creature be in normal surroundings?

"But I did not expect to live more than six months. Nor would the baby, even if he survived after losing his postnatal immunity."

"I wish you wouldn't make those disconcerting statements about when the world's going to end," my mad friend said.

"So I went back thirty five years," the Byzantine continued,

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"and doctored a birth record. I placed little Caliban with a middle-aged couple and told them he was my wild oat on a brilliant but unstable actress. I set up a trust fund."

The Byzantine's account abruptly ended. His eyes crossed and he laid his head on the table.

"Interesting," I said to my mad friend. "But what's with the extradition? I've heard some weird ideas to get a tax-free Paris vacation but what do the property owners have to say?"

"In addition to being police chief of Speedtrap, I am also mayor," my mad friend said.

"But don't you have to answer to the city council?"

"Not after she's absconded," a wife said.

"I should think the citizens would protest these high-handed tactics."

"Since the mine closed down I am the sole property owner of Speedtrap," my mad friend said.

"And one half of the total electorate," a wife added.

I began to see it but I still couldn't quite believe it. "How do you live?" I asked, then I remembered.

"As long as I can ticket two tourists a day we won't starve," my mad friend said. "But, just assuming God would permit such things, what do you think of the FBI story?"

I frowned. "He'd be 35 now, almost 36. With all the eightballs in existence I suppose he could find a place somewhere."

"A nice comfortable hole in civil service?" my friend needled.

"Well," I said thoughtfully, "it's of, by, and for the people and I've heard that the only difference between us and the Neanderthaler is accumulated experience."

"Assuming he had a soul," my mad friend injected.

"Cavemen were as smart as you?" a wife asked.

"Not exactly," I said, thinking it over. "Civilization protects the oddballs and freaks who, little by little, breed us back up into the trees. Primitive man, on the other hand, may not have believed in survival of the fittest, but he practiced it."

My mad friend made a rude noise.

"He had neither fang, claw, horns nor hooves. Nor was he crutched with 70 centuries of accumulated gadgetry. Your adult Neanderthaler was either very smart or very dead."

The errant Catalán—he of the shabby overcoat—returned with an immense, pouter-pigeon-breasted woman. He caught his partner's eye and they converged on our table. "Yankees go home!" the virago shrilled. With the ease of long practice, she lifted the Byzantine to his feet, reoriented his *boina*, and slapped him awake.

My mad friend produced a

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pistol with a suddenness which amazed me. "Hold it!" he growled, "I've seen that kind of commie snatch before."

"You want to see *my* papers?" the second Catalán asked in Brooklynese. The Tugboat Annie type suddenly lapsed into English and offered her credentials too. My mad friend hid his pistol.

I took a closer look. "Take it out again," I told my friend. "These amateur snatch artists have gotten the FBI and the Secret Service confused."

The Catalán smiled wickedly. "Kindly remind yourself of the Secret Service's principal function. And by the way," he added, "the director of the Saucer Works will take a dim view of your future if this gets out."

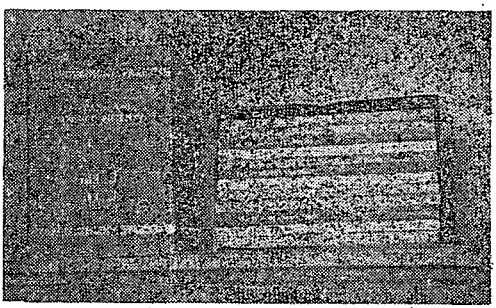
The Byzantine was awake now and stared blearily, mumbling. I bent closer and listened. "Fine boy," he was saying. "Proud of my son." His eyes came momentarily into focus and he remembered us. "By the way," he asked, "Did any of you vote for him?"

A beer and a half later I was still worrying about the Byzantine's attitude toward reality. "Do you think our boy Ug is going to take that Ultimatum in stride?" I asked.

"To be a man," my friend was muttering, "one must have an immortal soul."

"But is possession of one's soul a requisite for political office?"

"Probably not," my mad friend admitted.



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As a belated birthday present, we quote here from Jonathan N. Leonard's New York Times review of the Good Doctor's new book, THE WELLSPRINGS OF LIFE: *"Isaac Asimov . . . is that rare phenomenon, a professional scientist . . . who handles words skillfully . . . It is a good book."*

HEAVEN ON EARTH

by Isaac Asimov

THE NICEST THING ABOUT WRITING THESE MONTHLY COLUMNS is the constant mental exercise it gives me. Unceasingly, I must keep my eyes and ears open for anything that will spark something that will, in my opinion, be fresh and novel and of interest to the Gentle Reader. Whether I succeed or not, there is nevertheless no question that the circulation of the brain improves and each convolution throbs with activity and health.

For instance, a letter arrived today suggesting that I discuss the duodecimal system, where one counts by twelves rather than by tens, and this set up a mental chain reaction that ended in astronomy and, what's more, gave me a notion which, as far as I know, is original with me. Here's how it happened.

My first thought was that, after all, the duodecimal system *is* used in odd corners. For instance, we say that 12 objects make 1 dozen and 12 dozen make 1 gross. However, as far as I know, 12 has never been used as the base for a number system, except by mathematicians in play.

A number which has, on the other hand, been used as the base for a formal positional notation is 60. The ancient Babylonians used 10 as a base just as we do, but frequently used 60 as an alternate base.

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In a number based on 60, what we call the units column would contain any number from 1 to 59, while what we call the tens column would be the "sixties" column, and our hundreds column (ten times ten) would be the "thirty-six hundred" column (sixty times sixty).

Thus, when we write the number 123, what it really stands for is $(1 \times 10^2) + (2 \times 10^1) + (3 \times 10^0)$. And since 10^2 equals 100, 10^1 equals 10 and 10^0 equals 1, the total is $100 + 20 + 3$, or 123.

But if the Babylonians wrote the equivalent of 123, using 60 as the base, it would mean $(1 \times 60^2) + (2 \times 60^1) + (3 \times 60^0)$. And since 60^2 equals 3,600, 60^1 equals 60 and 60^0 equals 1, this works out to $3{,}600 + 120 + 3$, or 3,723 by our decimal notation. Using a positional notation with the base 60 is a "sexagesimal notation" from the Latin word for "sixtieth."

As the word "sixtieth" suggests, the sexagesimal notation can be carried into fractions, too.

Our own decimal notation will allow us to use a figure such as 0.156, where what is really meant is $0 + 1/10 + 5/100 + 6/1{,}000$. The denominators, you see, go up the scale in multiples of 10. In the sexagesimal scale, the denominators would go up the scale in multiples of 60 and 0.156 would represent $0 + 1/60 + 5/3{,}600 + 6/216{,}000$, since 3,600 equals 60×60, 216,000 equals $60 \times 60 \times 60$ and so on.

Those of you who know all about exponential notation will no doubt be smugly aware that $1/10$ can be written 10^{-1}, $1/100$ can be written 10^{-2} and so on, while $1/60$ can be written 60^{-1}, $1/3{,}600$ can be written 60^{-2} and so on. Consequently, a full number expressed in sexagesimal notation would be something like this: $(15)(45)(2).(17)(25)(59)$, or $(15 \times 60^2) + (45 \times 60^1) + (2 \times 60^0) + (17 \times 60^{-1}) + (25 \times 60^{-2}) + (59 \times 60^{-3})$—and if you want to amuse yourself by working out the equivalent in ordinary decimal notation, please do. You can even send the result to me, because I'm chickening out right now.

All this would be of purely academic interest, if it weren't for the fact that we still utilize sexagesimal notation in at least two important ways, which date back to the Greeks.

The Greeks had a tendency to pick up the number 60 from the Babylonians as a base, where computations were complicated, since so many numbers go evenly into 60, that fractions are avoided as often as possible (and who wouldn't avoid fractions as often as possible?).

One theory, for instance, is that the Greeks divided the radius of a circle into 60 equal parts so that in dealing with half a radius, or a third, or a fourth, or a fifth, or a sixth, or a tenth (and so on), they could always express it as a whole number of sixtieth. Then, since in

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ancient days the value of "pi" was often set equal to a rough and ready 3 (see "A Piece of Pi," F&SF, May 1960), and since the length of the circumference of a circle is equal to twice "pi" times the radius, the length of that circumference is equal to 6 times the radius or to 360 sixtieths of a radius. Thus (perhaps) began the custom of dividing a circle into 360 equal parts.

Another possible reason for doing so rests with the fact that the sun completes its circuit of the stars in a little over 365 days, so that in each day it moves about 1/365 of the way around the sky. Well, the ancients weren't going to quibble about a few days here and there and 360 is so much easier to work with that they divided the circuit of the sky into that many divisions and considered the sun as traveling through one of those parts (well, just about) each day.

A 360th of a circle is called a "degree" from Latin words meaning "step down." If the sun is viewed as travelling down a long circular stairway, it takes one step down (well, just about) each day.

Each degree, if we stick with the sexagesimal system, can be divided into 60 smaller parts and each of those smaller parts into 60 still smaller parts and each of those smaller parts into 60 still smaller parts and so on. The first division was called in Latin "pars minuta prima" (first small part) and the second was called "pars minuta secunda" (second small part), which has been shortened in English to "minutes" and "seconds" respectively.

We symbolize the degree by a little circle (naturally), the minute by a single stroke and the second by a double stroke, so that when we say that the latitude of a particular spot on earth is 39° 17′ 42″, we are saying that its distance from the equator is 39 degrees plus 17/60 of a degree plus 42/3,600 of a degree, and isn't that the sexagesimal system?

The second place where sexagesimals are still used is in measuring time (which was originally based on the movements of heavenly bodies). Thus we divide the hour into minutes and seconds and when we speak of a duration of 1 hour, 44 minutes and 20 seconds, we are speaking of a duration of 1 hour plus 44/60 of an hour plus 20/3,600 of an hour.

You can carry the system further than the second and, in the Middle ages, Arabic astronomers often did. There is a record of one who divided one sexagesimal fraction into another and carried out the quotient to ten sexagesimal places, which is the equivalent of 17 decimal places.

Now let's take sexagesimal fractions for granted, and let's consider

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next the value of breaking up circumferences of circles into a fixed number of pieces. And, in particular, consider the circle of the ecliptic along which the sun, moon and planets trace their path in the sky.

After all, how *does* one go about measuring a distance along the sky? One can't very well reach up with a tape measure. Instead, the system, essentially, is to draw imaginary lines from the two ends of the distance traversed along the ecliptic (or along any other circular arc, actually) to the center of the circle, where we can imagine our eye to be, and to measure the angle made by those two lines.

The value of this system is hard to explain without a diagram, but I shall try to do so, with my usual dauntless bravery (though you're welcome to draw your own diagram as I go along, just in case I turn out to be hopelessly confusing).

Suppose you have a circle with a diameter of 115 feet, and another circle drawn about the same center with a diameter of 230 feet, and still another drawn about the same center with a diameter of 345 feet. (These are "concentric circles" and would look like a target.)

The circumference of the innermost circle would be about 360 feet, that of the middle one 720 feet and that of the outermost 1,080 feet.

Now mark off 1/360 of the innermost circle's circumference, a length of arc 1 foot long, and from the two ends of the arc draw lines to the center. Since 1/360th of the circumference is 1 degree, the angle formed at the center may be called 1 degree also (particularly since 360 such arcs will fill the entire circumference and 360 such central angles will consequently fill the entire space about the center).

If the 1-degree angle is now extended outward so that the arms cut across the two outer circles, they will subtend a two-foot arc of the middle circle and a three-foot circle of the outer one. The arms diverge just enough to match the expanding circumference. The lengths of the arc will be different, but the fraction of the circle subtended will be the same. A 1-degree angle with vertex at the center of the circle will subtend a 1-degree arc of the circumference of any circle, regardless of its diameter, whether it is the circle bounding a proton or bounding the Universe (if we assume a Euclidean geometry, I quickly add). The same is analogously true for an angle of any size.

Suppose your eye was at the center of a circle that had two marks upon it. The two marks are separated by $\frac{1}{6}$ the circumference of the circle, that is by 360/6 or 60 degrees of arc. If you imagine a line drawn from the two marks to your eye, the lines will form an angle of 60 degrees. If you look first at one mark, then at the other you will have to swivel your eye through an angle of 60 degrees.

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And it wouldn't matter, you see, whether the circle was a mile from your eye or a trillion miles. If the two marks were a sixth of the circumference apart, they would be 60 degrees apart, regardless of distance. How nice to use such a measure, then, when you haven't the faintest idea of how far away the circle is.

So, since through most of man's history astronomers had no notion of the distance of the heavenly objects in the sky, angular measure was just the thing.

And if you think it isn't, try making use of linear measure. The average person, asked to estimate the diameter of the full moon *is appearance* almost instinctively makes use of linear measure. He is liable to reply, judiciously, "Oh, about a foot."

But as soon as he makes use of linear measure, he is setting a specific distance, whether he knows it or not. For an object a foot across to look as large as the full moon, it would have to be 36 yards away. I doubt that anyone who judges the moon to be a foot wide will also judge it to be no more than 36 yards distant.

If we stick to angular measure and say that the average width of the full moon is 31′, we are making no judgments as to distance and are safe.

But if we're going to insist on using angular measure, with which the general population is unacquainted, it becomes necessary to find some way of making it clear to everyone. The most common way of doing this, and to picture the moon's size, for instance, is to take some common circle with which we are all acquainted and calculate the distance at which it must be held to look as large as the moon.

One such circle is that of the twenty-five cent piece. It's diameter is about 0.96 inches and we won't be far off if we consider it just an inch in diameter. If a quarter is held 9 feet from the eye, it will subtend an arc of 31 minutes. That means it will look just as large as the full moon does, and, if it is held at that distance between your eye and the full moon, it will just cover it.

Now if you've never thought of this, you will undoubtedly be surprised that a quarter at 9 feet (which you must imagine will look quite small) can overlap the full moon (which you probably think of as quite large). To which I can only say: Try the experiment!

Well, this sort of thing will do for the sun and the moon but these, after all, are, of all the heavenly bodies, the largest in appearance. In fact, they're the only ones (barring an occasional comet) that show a visible disc. All other objects are measured in fractions of a minute or fractions of a second.

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It is easy enough to continue the principle of comparison by saying that a particular planet or star has the apparent diameter of a quarter held at a distance of a mile or ten miles or a hundred miles and this is, in fact, what is generally done. But of what use is that? You can't see a quarter at all, at such distances, and you can't picture its size. You're just substituting one unvisionable measure for another.

There must be some better way of doing it.

And at this point in my thoughts, I had my original (I hope) idea.

Suppose that the earth were exactly the size it is but were a huge hollow, smooth, transparent sphere. And suppose you were viewing the skies not from earth's surface, but with your eye precisely at earth's center. You would then see all the heavenly objects projected onto the sphere of the earth.

In effect, it would be as though you were using the entire globe of the earth as a background on which to paint a replica of the skies.

The value of this is that the terrestrial globe is the one sphere upon which we can easily picture angular measurement, since we have all learned about latitude and longitude, which *are* angular measurements. On the earth's surface, 1 degree is equal to 69 miles (with minor variations, which we can ignore, because of the fact that the earth is not a perfect sphere). Consequently, 1 minute, which is equal to 1/60 of a degree, is equal to 1.15 miles or to 6,060 feet, and 1 second, which is equal to $\frac{1}{60}$ of a minute, is equal to 101 feet.

You see, then, that if we know the apparent angular diameter of a heavenly body, we know exactly what its diameter would be if it were drawn on the earth's surface to scale.

The moon, for instance, with an average diameter of 31 minutes by angular measure, would be drawn with a diameter of 36 miles, if painted to scale on the earth's surface. It would neatly cover all of Greater New York or the space between Boston and Worcester.

Your first impulse may be a "WHAT!" but this is not really as large as it seems. Remember, you are really viewing this scale model from the center of the earth, four thousand miles from the surface, and just ask yourself how large Greater New York would seem, seen from a distance of four thousand miles. Or look at a globe of the earth and picture a circle with a diameter stretching from Boston to Worcester and you will see that it is small indeed compared to the whole surface of the earth, just as the moon itself is small indeed compared to the whole surface of the sky. (Actually, it would take the area of 490,000 bodies the size of the moon to fill the entire sky, and 490,000 bodies the size of our painted moon to fill all of the earth's surface.)

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But at least this shows the magnifying effect of the device I am proposing, and it comes in particularly handy where bodies smaller in appearance than the sun or the moon are concerned, just at the point where the quarter-at-a-distance-of-so-many-miles notion breaks down.

For instance, in Table 1, I present the maximum angular diameters of the various planets as seen at the time of their closest approach to earth, together with their linear diameter to scale if drawn on earth's surface.

Table 1 — Planets to Scale

Planet	Angular diameter (seconds)	Linear diameter (feet)
Mercury	12.7	1280
Venus	64.5	6510
Mars	25.1	2540
Jupiter	50.0	5050
Saturn	20.6	2080
Uranus	4.2	425
Neptune	2.4	240

I omit Pluto because its angular diameter is not well known. However, if we assume that planet to be about the size of Mars then, as its furthest point in its orbit, it will still have an angular diameter of 0.2 second and can be presented as a circle 20 feet in diameter.

Each planet could have its satellites drawn to scale with great convenience. For instance, the four large satellites of Jupiter would be circles ranging from 110 to 185 feet in diameter, set at distances of 3 to 14 miles from Jupiter. The entire Jovian system to the orbit of its outermost satellite (Jupiter IX, a circle about 5 inches in diameter) would cover a circle about 350 miles in diameter.

The real interest in such a setup, however, would be the stars. The stars, like the planets, do not have a visible disc to the eyes. Unlike the planets, however, they do not have a visible disc even to the largest telescope. The planets (all but Pluto) can be blown up to discs even by moderately sized telescopes; not so the stars.

By indirect methods the apparent angular diameter of some stars have been determined. For instance, the largest angular diameter of any star is probably that of Betelgeuse, which is 0.047 seconds. Even the huge 200-inch telescope cannot magnify that diameter more than a thousand

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fold and under such magnification, the largest star is still less than 1 minute or arc in appearance and is therefore no more of a disc to the 200-incher than Jupiter is to the unaided eye. And, of course, most stars are far smaller in appearance than is giant Betelgeuse. (Even stars that are in actuality larger than Betelgeuse are so far away as to appear smaller.)

But on my earth scale, Betelgeuse with an apparent diameter of 0.047 seconds of arc would be represented by a circle about 4.8 feet in diameter.

(Compare that with the 22 feet of even most distant Pluto.)

However, it's no use trying to get actual figures on angular diameters because these have been measured for very few stars. Instead, let's make the assumption that all the stars have the same intrinsic brightness the sun has. (This is not so, of course, but the sun is an average star, and so the assumption will not radically change the appearance of the universe.)

Now then, area for area, the sun (or any star) remains at constant brightness to the eye regardless of distance. If the sun were moved out to twice its present distance, its apparent brightness would decrease by four times but so would its apparent surface area. What we could see of its area would be just as bright as it ever was; there would be less of it, that's all.

The same is true the other way, too. Mercury, at its closest approach to the sun, sees a sun that is no brighter per square second than ours is, but it sees one with ten times as many square seconds as ours has, so that Mercury's sun is ten times as bright as ours.

Well, then, if all the stars were as luminous as the sun, then the apparent area would be directly proportional to the apparent brightness.

We know the magnitude of the sun (—26.72) as well as of the various stars and that gives us our scale of comparative brightness, from which we can work out a scale of comparative areas and, therefore, comparative diameters. Furthermore, since we know the angular measure of the sun, we can use the comparative diameters to calculate the comparative angular measures which, of course, we can convert to linear diameters (to scale) on the earth.

But never mind the details (you've probably skipped the previous paragraph already).

I'll give you the results in Table 2.

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Table 2 — Stars to Scale

Magnitude of Star	Angular diameter (seconds)	Linear diameter (inches)
—1 (e.g. Sirius)	0.014	17.0
0 (e.g. Rigel)	0.0086	10.5
1 (e.g. Altair)	0.0055	6.7
2 (e.g. Polaris)	0.0035	4.25
3	0.0022	2.67
4	0.0014	1.70
5	0.00086	1.05
6	0.00055	0.67

(The fact that Betelgeuse has an apparent diameter of 0.047 and is yet no brighter than Altair is due to the fact that Betelgeuse, a red giant, has a lower temperature than the sun and is much dimmer per unit area in consequence. Remember that Table 2 is based on the assumption that all stars are as luminous as the sun.)

So you see what happens once we leave the Solar system. Within that system, we have bodies that must be drawn to scale in yards and miles. Outside the system, we deal with bodies which, to scale, range in mere inches.

If you imagine such small patches of earth's surface, as seen from the earth's center, I think you will get a new vision as to how small the stars are in appearance and why telescopes cannot make visible discs of them.

The total number of stars visible to the naked eye is about 6,000, of which ⅔ are dim stars of 5th and 6th magnitude. We might then picture the earth as spotted with 6,000 stars, most of them being about an inch in diameter. There would be only a very occasional larger one —only 20, all told, that would be as much as six inches in diameter.

The average distance between two stars on earth's surface would be 180 miles. There would be one or, at most, two stars in New York State, and one hundred stars, more or less, within the territory of the United States (including Alaska).

The sky, you see, is quite uncrowded, regardless of its appearance.

Of course, these are only the visible stars. Through a telescope, myriads of stars too faint to be seen by the naked eye can be made out and the 200-inch telescope can photograph stars as dim as the 22nd magnitude.

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A star of magnitude 22, drawn on the earth to scale, would be a mere 0.0004 inches in diameter, or about the size of a bacterium. (Seeing a shining bacterium on earth's surface from a vantage point at earth's center, 4,000 miles down, is a dramatic indication of the power of the modern telescope.)

The number of individual stars visible down to this magnitude would be roughly two billion. (There are, of course, at least a hundred billion stars in our Galaxy, but almost all of them are located in the Galactic nucleus which is completely hidden from our sight by dust clouds. The two billion we do see are just the scattering in our own neighborhood of the spiral arms.)

Drawn to scale on the earth, this means that among the 6,000 circles we have already drawn (mostly an inch in diameter) we must place a powdering of two billion more dots, a small proportion of which are still large enough to see, but most of which are microscopic in size.

The average distance between stars even after this mighty powdering would still be, on the earth-scale, 1700 feet.

This answers a question I, for one, have asked myself in the past. Once a person looks at a photograph showing the myriad stars visible to a large telescope, he can't help wondering how it is possible to see beyond all that talcum powder and observe the outer galaxies.

Well, you see, despite the vast numbers of stars, the clear space between them is still comparatively huge. In fact, it has been estimated that all the starlight that reaches us is equivalent to the light for 1100 stars of magnitude 1. This means that if all the stars that can be seen were massed together, they would fill a circle (on earth-scale) that would be 18.5 feet in diameter.

From this we can conclude that all the stars combined do not cover up as much of the sky as the planet, Pluto. As a matter of fact, the moon, all by itself, obscures nearly 300 times as much of the sky as do all other night-time heavenly bodies, planets, satellites, planetoids, stars, put together.

There would be no trouble whatever in viewing the spaces outside our Galaxy if it weren't for the dust-clouds. Those are really the only obstacle, and they can't be removed even if we set up a telescope in space.

What a pity the universe couldn't really be projected on earth's surface temporarily—just long enough to send out the Walrus's seven maids with seven mops with strict orders to give the universe a thorough dusting.

How happy astronomers would then be!

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BOOKS

THE FIFTH GALAXY READER, *edited by H. L. Gold, Doubleday, $3.95*

SOME OF YOUR BLOOD, *Theodore Sturgeon, Ballantine, 35¢*

PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE, *Zenna Henderson, Doubleday, $3.50*

THE MILKY WAY GALAXY, *Ben Bova, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, $5.00*

TWILIGHT WORLD, *Poul Anderson, A Torquil Book, Distributed by Dodd, Mead & Company, $2.95*

THE UNEXPECTED, *edited by Leo Margulies, Pyramid Books, 35¢*

HORACE GOLD, NOW ON SICK-leave from the editorial chair of one of this magazine's most honored rivals, has put together THE FIFTH GALAXY READER, a collection of fifteen stories that appeared in that magazine between 1954 and 1959. Mr. Gold has long been a controversial figure backstage in the science fiction world; some authors claiming that he is too demanding an editor to work with, others replying that discipline is precisely the function of an editor in order to get the best work out of his contributors.

This splendid anthology will enable readers to decide the question on its merits. We're certain that the vote will be in favor of Mr. Gold's results in this collection after a reading of Fritz Leiber's delightful "The Last Letter," Jack McKenty's droll "$1,000 A Plate," Avram Davidson's nostalgic "Take Wooden Indians," Frederik Pohl's and Cyril Kornbluth's moving "Nightmare With Zeppelins," and Cordwainer Smith's *outré* "When The People Fell."

These five stories alone make the collection worthwhile. And although we did not care very much for the rest, we were answered in advance in Mr. Gold's sensible in-

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troduction: "And so to the stories in this anthology; if you like every one of them, either you're omnivorous, or I flubbed . . . What you like in this book, others won't, and vice versa . . ."

We wish you a speedy recovery, Mr. Gold; and come out fighting.

"George Smith," a G.I. in the recent Korean unpleasantness, wrote a two-line letter to his girl back home which raised the eyebrows of his army censor, who brought George to the attention of his commanding officer. The officer asked George one simple, harmless question, and George promptly attempted to murder him. Now George is in an army hospital, and the psychiatrists are working over him. This is the narrative hook of SOME OF YOUR BLOOD.

Theodore Sturgeon has taken the sort of material you find in a psychiatric case history, and with his masterful skill has turned it into a fascinating Grand Guignol mystery. The story is told through correspondence between army psychiatrists (who make charming professional jokes), clinical reactions, and other tests. Not until the very end do you learn what George has written home, and understand the startling reason why.

It may be argued by some that this is not science fiction. We reply that psychiatry is surely the newest of sciences, and has been too long neglected by science fiction authors. Mr. Sturgeon does not extrapolate very deeply, if, indeed, he extrapolates at all, but he has made an electrifying beginning; and SOME OF YOUR BLOOD is certainly off-trail and daring enough to be reviewed here. Certainly, it's a brilliant revision of the old vampire theme.

One word of warning to the squeamish: This book is not for you if you haven't the stomach for the perverted facts of life. Mr. Sturgeon has shown amazing (almost foolhardy) courage in his choice of subject, and must be read with equal valor.

Zenna Henderson's stories of "The People" have been quite possibly the most popular series to appear in this magazine. Now she has gathered them together and woven them into a novel called PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE.

"The People," for those of you who are not regular readers, are the descendants of the survivors of a spaceship from another planet which crashed on Earth long, long ago. "The People" were scattered, and their children have lost the knowledge of their origins. Since they possess special powers of telepathy, telekinesis, etc., which would be regarded with horror and terror by normal terrene natives, theirs is a story of the conflict be-

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tween their desire to conform to Earth standards, and their slow recognition and acceptance of their special identity.

The book is skillfully and warmly written, and we heartily recommend PILGRIMAGE to all who desire to have their science fiction sweetened.

After taking the pledge, we have fallen off the wagon again and read another astronomy text; this one THE MILKY WAY GALAXY by Ben Bova. It is a remarkably readable piece of popular science writing. Mr. Bova knows how to invest the intriguing problems of astronomy with extra excitement and interest.

He has actually managed to produce some new astronomical photographs for this old wino department which thought it knew them all, and the drawings by Peter Robinson and the diagrams from *The Scientific American* are wonderfully lucid. As a matter of fact they enable us, at long last, to understand the Russell-Hertzsprung diagram.

One word of caution, however, about Mr. Bova's style. He has a tendency to write in the choppy manner of modern mystery writers, using one-sentence paragraphs and one-word sentences for the sake of dramatic impact. In our review of Isaac Asimov's INTELLIGENT MAN'S GUIDE TO SCIENCE we suggested the need to develop an acceptable language for popular science. Alas, we don't believe that Mr. Bova's is it.

TWILIGHT WORLD by Poul Anderson is a loose novel put together from old short stories and new material, and focused on a theme which has fascinated science fiction authors for the past ten years, that of the struggle of man to emerge from the chaos of an atomic war, with the accompanying problems of broken communications, regression to savagery, radiation contamination, and mutaphobia. (Have we coined a word?)

Mr. Anderson is one of the practicing authors who are the backbone of contemporary science fiction. His work is always competent, or a little better; his ideas are always interesting, if not altogether fresh. It is the question of these qualifications that concerns us most deeply. We have had the feeling for some time that Mr. Anderson has been on the verge of hurling a thunderbolt into science fiction, but has never brought it off. We wonder why.

But if TWILIGHT WORLD isn't Mr. Anderson's master-stroke, it certainly is a colorful and sometimes touching and sometimes exciting novel, entitled to a respected place on your bookshelves.

Leo Margulies, one of the more historic figures in science fiction (he goes back almost as far as the

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godlike Hugo Gernsback, who started everything) has collected eleven stories in an anthology called THE UNEXPECTED. It's interesting to note that most of the stellar authors in this anthology were kids in knee-pants when Mr. Margulies was editing Thrilling Wonder Stories.

Familiar stories by Theodore Sturgeon, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Fritz Leiber, Fredrik Pohl, Anthony Boucher and Frederic Brown are stand-outs, but are only a shade more eye-catching than the remaining four whom space will not permit us to name. Mr. Margulies has attempted to gather stories which are halfway between fantasy and science fiction, and succeeded very well.

Unfortunately, Pyramid Books has not done as well with their layout and printing. They have crammed the material in, starting a story wherever the preceding ends, regardless of whether it's in the middle of a page, or one or two lines from the top or bottom. A most unattractive job, dear Pyramid Books. It reflects an indifference to author and reader alike, and we resent it.

—Alfred Bester

We are grateful to Mr. E. F. T. Rice of Wilmington, Del., for having sent us this chilling little tale, which was written by the 11-year-old daughter of a friend of his. The new talents continue to come on . . . !

THE FLOWER, by Mildred Posselt

There was a flower that grew in front of my window.

It died, and I died.

When it died it made a funny sound. Well not really a funny sound—more of a weird sound. It screamed.

It screamed, and I screamed.

I have a sister. She found me dead. She screamed.

Now the flower is growing in front of her window.

I am afraid she is going to have to come with me.

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Salvadore Ross had a driving urge to improve himself, and literally fell into a talent for doing so. The problem then became one of knowing where to stop. . . .

THE SELF-IMPROVEMENT OF SALVADORE ROSS

by Henry Slesar

SALVADORE ROSS, TOO POOR, too scrawny, and spurned by the only girl he had ever loved, ran into more of his usual luck on Friday afternoon at the bottling plant. He slipped in a sticky pool on a runway and dropped fifteen feet to the cement floor. His right leg was broken, and he went cursing in an ambulance to the city hospital. They put him in a ward next to a wheezing old man with pneumonia. When an interne began poking at him the next morning, he yelled, and he told interne, hospital, old man, and bottling plant to go to hell.

He was calmer the next day, his young, broken-nosed face graven against the pillow like some bushy-haired gargoyle. Then the old man began muttering complaints.

"Ah, you ain't so bad," Sal said. "You should only break a leg like me, pal, you'll know what trouble is."

"Broken leg!" The old man wiped his mouth contemptuously. "Listen, I'll trade you that broken leg anytime. You just ask me."

Sal grinned. "All right, so I'm asking. You give me that little cold of yours, you can have my broken leg. See how you like it, Pop."

"You don't know what you're talking. A young horse like you, you could break both legs and next month you'll be dancing."

"What's the matter, Pop, you don't want to do business? Trade me for the leg, go ahead. Is it a deal?"

The old man chuckled. "Yeah, sure, it's a deal."

The next morning Sal figured there must have been a window open near his bed, because he woke up with a hacking cough and a wheeze deep in his chest.

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The new symptoms took his mind off the pain in his leg, and when the interne came around to examining the splints and prepare the leg for setting, Sal laughed and coughed and told him that he thought the damned thing had healed itself.

The interne took one look and hurried out of the ward, returning five minutes later with a sour-mouthed stethoscoped man in a rumpled gray suit. They both did a survey on his leg and the sour-mouthed one muttered something about faulty diagnosis. Then he ordered a series of tests. It was only after they left him alone that the old man in the next bed started moaning and complaining about his leg. Sal watched with interest as the new huddle took place, but he knew the results even before the experts announced it. He laughed to himself, remembering the swap they had made, and the situation tickled him so much that he didn't even marvel over the mysterious transaction. He was too pleased. The old guy was bitching more than ever, and Sal had proved his point. A broken leg was a hell of a lot worse than a lousy cold.

It took another ten days for him to get rid of the congestion in his lungs, but in ten days he was fit enough to leave the hospital. His first thought on leaving was to see how much sympathy he could get from the girl he loved.

Leah Maitland was the prettiest girl in Sal's neighborhood, and Sal had been hopelessly stuck on her since high school. She was too pretty for him; she had melted brown eyes and a figure that made cheap clothes look silky and expensive. She was too smart for him, too; she had a father who was a retired teacher, who wore a shawl like an old lady and clucked whenever he heard Sal's crude speech. When Sal knocked on Leah's door, he hoped her father wouldn't be home. But he was.

"Leah's not here," he said. "She's at school."

"School?" Sal blinked at the old man, looking stupidly at the tattered cloth around his bent shoulders.

"She's taking a teacher's course, didn't you know? She ought to be home in a little while, if you want to wait."

"Never mind," Sal said. "Just tell her I was here. Tell her" He stopped. "Tell her I was sick, but I'm okay now. Tell her I'll call her up soon."

The old man frowned, and the wrinkled, disapproving face moved Sal to lies.

"Tell her I quit my job at the plant. Tell her I got a much better job, that everything's different with me now."

"Different? How different?"

"Just different," Sal said. "So long, Mr. Maitland." And he stuck his thumbs in his pants pockets

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and went down the stairs, feeling unaccountably better.

He made one lie come true. He telephoned the bottling plant and told them he was quitting. Then he celebrated.

"You paying for this?" the bartender said, holding back on the bottle. "You said you quit your job."

"Sure, Phil, I got money. Compensation from the plant."

Phil, a heavy bald man with a religious medal clanking on a chain around his sweaty neck, grunted and poured the drink. Then he took Sal's dollar and put it in the register. He made a ceremony out of punching the key and slipping in the bill. Sal watched him and licked his lips at the sight of the fat pile of green. "I wish I had your dough," he said.

"Be thankful for what you got," Phil said piously.

"Like what?"

The bartender considered the question. Then he smiled, good-naturedly. "Well, you got hair. That's more than I got."

"You want the hair? Take it." Sal tugged at the curly crop. Phil laughed, but Sal didn't. "No, I mean it. You want the hair, it's yours. You know what happened in the hospital? I traded an old guy for his pneumonia. He got my broken leg, and I got his pneumonia. What do you think of that?"

"I hear lots of funny stories."

"What's the matter, Phil? You're big with the faith stuff. I'll tell you what. You give me the dough in your register, you can have my hair Fair enough?"

"Sure, it's a deal," Phil laughed. He mopped around Sal's elbows, and went off to serve a beer. But he came back and repeated it. "You give me the hair, Sal, you can have it all."

"Count it," Sal said.

Phil counted it, laughing all the time. There was one hundred and eight dollars in the register. Before the evening was out, Sal upped the total by four dollars. He got back to his room drunk. In the morning, he woke up sick with a hangover. When he put his hand to his aching head, he touched smooth skin.

He went to a mirror, and saw the shiny clean dome exaggerating the thin features and the broken nose. He started to shake all over and wished he had a drink. That made him think of Phil. He telephoned the bar and nobody answered. He called Phil at home.

"Jesus, Sal, Jesus, how'd you do it? It's a miracle!" Phil said. "I never saw nothing like it. My wife thinks it's a toupee." He laughed hysterically "Pull it, honey, go on, yank it, sweetheart. Ouch! Ouch!" he said hilariously, ecstatically. Sa slammed the receiver down and wept into his hands.

In the afternoon, a kid brought him an envelope crammed with

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money. He put the bills on the bed, and it seemed like a pitiful amount for what he had exchanged. He swore never to get so bad a bargain again.

That night, in a new hat, new suit, new shoes, he went into a strange bar, looking for something. There was a tramp, with thick black hair, half-closed eyes, and a dry mouth, cadging drinks in whispers. Sal bought him one, and said:

"You really got the shakes, huh, pop?" He looked at the hair. "That's a nice head of hair for a man your age, pop."

"Damn cold rotten month," the tramp whined.

"Have another," Sal said. "Look, what you need is a couple of bottles to last you. You know what I mean?"

"No."

"What's an old guy like you need hair for? Old guys like you, all they need is a warm place and some whiskey, am I right? Tell you what, pop. How'd you like to make a trade?"

Back in his room, Sal resolved to stay awake and watch the miracle take place. There was no sense of wonder involved; he had only a mechanical interest in the process. But at three o'clock, he got sleepy and dozed off in a chair, dreaming of Leah. His eyes snapped open at dawn, and his hand flew to his head. In his fingers: thick, coarse, dirty, beautiful hair. He went to a mirror and whooped in delight. Not just because of the hair, but because he knew for sure, for *sure,* that he could do it anytime he wanted, that he could swap his way to everything he wanted.

Then he remembered Jan. Jan was a big muscular kid with blond hair and the temperament of a cocker spaniel, and the worst pool-player that ever came out of P.S. 19. Sal had cleaned up on Jan plenty of times; he was no shark, but he looked like Hoppe next to the big clumsy kid. Jan was a chauffeur now, for a guy named Halpert, reputed to be filthy rich. And Halpert was old. Rich and old, and approachable through Jan. The combination was right.

He found Jan at Grimski's, leaning on a cue stick and smiling with innocent pleasure as his opponent dropped four in a row into the pockets. Sal pulled him aside and put the proposition to him. Would Jan introduce him to his boss?

"Mr. Halpert?" Jan's face lengthened. "Gee, Sal, I can't do that. Mr. Halpert don't see people, you know how it is. He hardly ever leaves the apartment."

"But I got a deal for him," Sal said fiercely. "It's important!"

Jan laughed sweetly. "He won't talk any deal, Sal, don't kid yourself. He's a funny old guy, but not *that* funny." He looked up as his

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opponent missed a bank shot and stepped away from the table. Jan looked over the setup on the bright green felt, tucked his tongue in the corner of his mouth, and missed. He chuckled, and chalked his cue.

"Listen," Sal said desperately. "You get me in to see Halpert, I'll give you something for your trouble."

"Like what?"

"I got no money, but I'll give you something else. You can have my game, Jan."

"Your what?"

"You can play good as me, I'll swap my pool game for it. Is it a deal?"

"I don't get you. You mean you'll coach me?"

"I won't have to. You'll play good as me, that's all. I can do things like that. I can't explain how, but I can. Just say yes, Jan, that's all you gotta say. If you start shooting good, will you get me in to see Halpert?"

"Hey," his partner said. "Make your shot."

"It's a deal," Jan laughed. He picked up his stick, and muffed an easy layup.

Early the next afternoon, he got a phone call from Jan, direct from Grimski's. Jan was too excited to be coherent, so Sal went to the pool parlor and listened to the stuttered story of his sudden prowess. He had just beaten Grimski himself, and the owner, baffled, had paid off a three-to-one bet on the game. Jan offered to take on Sal himself, but Sal knew better. Instead, he talked about old man Halpert.

Two days later, the chauffeur picked Sal up in Halpert's shiny Bentley, and took him to the big apartment house on lower Fifth Avenue The car's interior made Sal choke with emotion, and so did the first sight of Halpert's floor-through apartment. Halpert was in the library; there was a real fireplace in the room.

"This is the guy I told you about," Jan said.

"He doesn't look like any doctor to me." Halpert said it contemptuously. He was a small fat man with a pink mottled face. His dark gray suit had a vest with white piping. He wheezed when he talked, and Sal could see the tiny veins in his nose and cheeks contract and expand with every breath.

When Jan left, Sal cleared his throat. "Not a doctor exactly, Mr. Halpert, is that what Jan said?"

"What do you want, boy?"

"I want to make a deal. Only it's gonna sound crazy, so don't throw me out right away. You know how old I am?"

"What the hell is this?" Halpert growled.

"I'm twenty-six. How old are you, Mr. Halpert?"

"Listen—" Halpert said.

"No, wait a minute. I don't

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care how old, Mr. Halpert. What I mean is, it don't matter. What I want to know is, how much would you give to be like me? Twenty-six, I mean?"

Halpert's small eyes moved quickly, as if he was afraid.

"Don't think I'm crazy, Mr. Halpert. I want to make a swap. You don't have to believe me, not yet. But if the price is right, I'll trade you my twenty-six for whatever you are."

"Jan!" Halpert shouted.

"Please, give me the benefit of the doubt. How much would you give to be twenty-six again, just tell me that and I'll get out of here."

"Is that a promise?"

"How much, Mr. Halpert?"

The old man relaxed a little, and went so far as to smile a small smile. "I'd give a million bucks, that's what I'd give. What kind of pills you peddling, kid?"

"You got that much money?"

"And more. Now will you get the hell out of here?"

"Will you swap me, Mr. Halpert? Will you give me a million bucks for my twenty-six?"

"Just like that?"

"All you do is say yes, Mr. Halpert. The rest is easy. Only don't try double-crossing me, it won't work. Once we make the swap, it's final. I get the million bucks, you get to be twenty-six. What do you say, Mr. Halpert?"

Four days later, Halpert signed up a crew of four, two of them strapping women, and went on a south sea cruise in a small yacht. His disappearance sent the stock of his company into a tailspin, but that did not affect the fortune that had passed into the hands of Salvadore Ross.

The rental agent that placed Sal in the East Side penthouse had a lot of laughs with his wife over the transaction. An ancient, shriveled runt like Ross, wanting that kind of bachelor quarters, was an incongruity worthy of laughter. The building employees chuckled, too, but they hid their amusement behind the old man's back. He was too rich to offend.

Albert, the kid who ran the night elevator, was especially polite. The old guy had taken a fancy to him; his first tip had financed a sharp, second-hand suit. Albert, who was nineteen, thought about clothes almost as much as he thought about women.

One night, he brought the old guy upstairs, and found him friendlier than usual—he'd even invited Albert in for a drink when his shift ended. Then he asked him questions.

"How old are you, Albert?"

"Nineteen, last April."

"How much you make a year?"

Albert blushed. "I dunno. I get thirty-six bucks a week."

"How long do you think it'd take to save a thousand?"

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"Never," Albert grinned. "I could never save it."

"What would you give for that money?"

"Huh?"

"You're only nineteen. What if you were twenty? Would that bother you a lot?"

"Nah. Nineteen, twenty, what's the difference?"

"Would you make a deal like that? Swap one year, for a thousand bucks?"

"Boy, would I!"

Ross smiled. His mouth was a black hole. He opened a desk drawer and took out a checkbook. He wrote laboriously. Albert looked at the shaky script, and whistled.

"Wow! Is this for *me*, Mr. Ross?"

"Sure it is," the old man cackled. "You just made a deal for it, Albert, a very good deal. Anytime you want to sell any more years, you come see me. And you can tell your friends about it, too; Im always good for ready cash."

A week later, Albert returned. There was no perceptible change in his appearance, except for the new suit he wore. By the time he left, there was a check for five grand in the pocket.

With his new fortune, Albert resigned his job and took a trip out west. The young man who replaced him on the elevator was named Russell, and he was only seventeen. He left a month later, claiming a severe illness. The building management could believe it, all right; Russell looked a good ten years older.

There were others.

Six months later, Salvadore Ross stepped before the full-length mirror in the thick-carpeted penthouse bedroom, and saw himself once more as a young man of twenty-six.

He paid his call on Leah Maitland on a cold afternoon in October. He found Leah's old man in a wheelchair, with the shawl over his knees instead of his shoulders. He had been sick; he had suffered a stroke since Sal had seen him last; from the looks of the shabby apartment, the past year had been grim. Even Leah looked gaunter, her melted eyes brighter and more desperate.

"Where've you been?" she said lightly. "It's almost a whole year, Sal."

"I've been busy," he smiled. "New job, new apartment, new everything. I'm doing pretty well now, Leah."

The old man grunted and said nothing. He turned his chalky face away from Sal, and wheeled off into the bedroom.

"I'm sorry about your old man," Sal said. "Sorry about his being sick. Things must have been tough for you."

"You look—different, Sal."

"I am different," he said proud-

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ly. "Look, you think you can come for a little while? Take a little ride?"

"Ride?"

"I got a car now," Sal said casually.

The car was waiting outside. It was a Silver Cloud Rolls, chauffeurless, because Sal wanted only his hands on the silken wheel. Leah gasped when she saw it. When they emerged under the canopy of the glittering apartment house on the East River, her face was almost stupid in her bewilderment. She thought he was joking, or worse, that he was involved in something profitable but nefarious. He laughed at every expression of her consternation. It was the best day of his life.

The next week, he took her to the season's most expensive restaurant, and after, on the furry white couch in his penthouse living room, began a crude attempt at love-making. She warded him off, but there was no final rejection in her manner. He lit a real fire in the real firpelace, and Leah hugged herself contentedly as she watched the dancing flames. Sal knew it was the right moment, the romantic moment Leah would expeet, and he made the proper speech. She didn't reply for a long while.

"I just don't know, Sal," she said.

"What's there to know? I want to marry you, Leah. You know I was always nuts about you." He put his arm around her shoulder. "I can be anything you want, Leah. You want me to be smart, like your old man, I could be that, too." He saw the dark shift in her expression, and said: "It's the old man that bothers you, ain't it? He still don't like me, huh?"

"No," she whispered. "He doesn't, Sal."

"And you think a lot of him—"

"It's not just that he's smart. It's something more important, Sal, something—"

"Something I don't have?" He turned her about to face him. "What is it, Leah? You just tell me what it is?"

"I don't know the word for it—"

"Then make up a word!"

"Heart. Compassion. I don't know—"

"Compassion—"

"I guess that's it. All my life, ever since I can remember, he's had that quality. I don't ever want to live without it, Sal. Can you understand that?"

It was during Leah's morning school session that Sal paid a visit to her father. The old man didn't appear surprised to see him, but there was added hostility in his greeting.

"Since when do you come to see me?" Maitland grunted. "You know Leah's not home mornings."

"I wanted to talk, Mr. Maitland, just the two of us."

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"I have nothing to say to you, Salvadore." His face reddened. "If it's about Leah, nothing at all. You know I'm a sick man, don't you? I don't have long on this earth, Salvadore, a few months, maybe only weeks. I wouldn't want to leave my Leah in the hands of someone like you . . ."

"But you're wrong. I didn't come to talk about Leah."

The old man seemed perplexed; he must have been dreading a formal bid for Leah's hand. "Then what is it?"

"It's about you, Mr. Maitland. Look, I know you never liked me, and I didn't come here to change your mind. I came to talk business. I want to make a deal. I want to buy something."

"What are you talking about?"

"You got something I want, Mr. Maitland. I'm willing to pay for it, any price you name. You could use money, Mr. Maitland, I know that. Not for yourself; I mean for Leah . . ."

"I've got nothing to sell you. I don't own anything."

"Yes, you do," Sal said eagerly. "You got something I need real bad, Mr. Maitland. I don't know what you'd call it, exactly—Leah, she says it's like, compassion."

"What kind of crazy talk is this? Do you even know what you're talking about?"

"I know, don't worry about that. A lot of people thought I was crazy when I offered 'em this kind of deal. But I've done all right. Take my word for it," he said proudly. "I've done great!"

"You think you can *buy* a thing like that? Pay for it, like a dozen eggs?"

"I know I can, Mr. Maitland. All you do is say yes, and I'll give you any amount of dough you name. Within reason," he added softly. "Within reason, Mr. Maitland."

"I think you'd better go," the old man said. "I don't think you feel well, Salvadore."

"A hundred thousand bucks, Mr. Maitland. How does that strike you? Would you make a deal for that?"

"You're really serious?"

"I'll bring you the check tomorrow; enough money to take care of you for the rest of your life."

The old man chuckled. "All right," he said. "I don't know what kind of madness you've got, Salvadore. But all right."

The next day, Salvadore Ross woke up with tears on his cheeks. He brushed at them with his hand and looked at his moist fingertips with wonder. What was he crying about? What kind of nutty dreams had he had the night before?

He shrugged, got out of bed, and dressed slowly. He had breakfast, and the strange, sad mood persisted. Was this the compassion he had bargained for? This aura of melancholy, these un-

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wanted tears? He found himself looking at people on the street with strange feelings of sympathy for the emotions he read on their faces. A bum hit him for a handout, and he found himself pressing a five-dollar bill in the dirty hand. A child was being scolded on the street; he wanted to go over and comfort her. He thought of Leah, and his thoughts were more complex, and more wonderful, than any he had ever experienced; it was as if she were with him right then, near him, loving him.

He hailed a taxi, and went to Leah's apartment.

"Mr. Maitland?" He knocked forcefully on the door, wanting to see the old man's gentle face, wanting to touch the hand of Leah's father. The door opened. "Hello, Mr. Maitland," Sal grinned. "Gee, it's good to see you, Mr. Maitland."

"Come in," the old man said. "You brought the check?"

"I brought it," Sal said.

"Is it certified?"

"It's a bank check, good as cash."

"Put it on the table," Maitland said coldly.

Sal wanted to make a speech, say something that would make him understand what he was feeling, but his emotion was bigger than his vocabulary. He reached into his pocket, found the check, and placed it carefully on the cloth-covered table near the old man.

Then he turned to Leah's father with a smile enriching his face, and put out his hand.

The old man didn't take it. His features were stone. He pulled aside the blanket on his lap, and there was a shotgun gripped firmly in his hands. The smile was still on Salvadore Ross's face when the old man pulled the trigger and killed him, without hesitation, without mercy, without compassion.

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When 300 years had passed without a war, they woke the frozen army to discharge it, convinced that never again would there be need of men skilled in the arts of war. . . .

FINAL MUSTER

by Rick Rubin

COMING OUT OF STASIS IS A PECULIAR sensation. Life returns first to your brain, and for a second you are aware that the rest of you is dead—not just asleep but actually without life. You are standing there in your stasis cubicle, heavily loaded with equipment, and your body is dead. But you don't fall down and the juice returns to the big muscles of your legs and arms and chest and then to all of the minor muscles and blood to veins and arteries and finally to every tiny capillary. Then you are awake and you step out into the world.

The sun was half way up the east side of the sky, and across the parade ground I could see the barracks and ordinance buildings and mess halls and other structures of Fort Morris shimmering in the rising heat waves. Lieutenant Rolf Baker, my platoon leader, was standing in front of the bank of cubicles that held myself and three other sergeants. I threw him a salute.

"Good morning, Sergeant Oskowski," he said.

"Good morning, sir," I said. "They woke us late this time."

"Later than you think, Sergeant. Three hundred years late. It's 2516."

"You don't say! Three hundred years without a war. Who finally upset the applecart, sir?"

"I'm afraid I don't know. I don't even know who we're fighting."

"It's pretty unusual for them not to tell us right off."

"There's supposed to be a formation in an hour, Oskowski. We'll find out then. Better go wake your men."

To my left the other three Sergeants were coming out of their stasis cubicles. Around us the whole Regimental Combat Team was coming to life, 5000 officers

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and men stepping out of deep-freeze, ready and able to fight anybody's war. We mobilize down through the ranks—Colonel Moss our C.O. is unfrozen by the civilian authorities, he wakes four Lt. Colonels, they wake four more each, and so on down through Majors to Captains to Lieutenants to squad leaders like myself, who wake their squads. We come out of our stasis cubicles fully armed and in prime condition, ready to be fed, briefed and move in less than an hour if necessary.

In the old Greek myth the man planted dragon's teeth and fighting men sprang up out of the ground. I can never quite get the analogy out of my mind, seeing the regiment come out of their stasis cubicles. The difference is that in the myth the soldiers fell to fighting among themselves, while the 45th Regimental Combat Team comes out a disciplined unit.

Unfreezing consists of throwing just one switch per man. I went down the row that held my squad throwing the switches, then sat down in front and started checking over my tommygun. Of course it wasn't actually a tommygun, the old 20th century weapon. More properly it was a rapid fire blaster, Model 2079—a cross between a flame thrower and a junior-size atomic cannon with a miniturized back pack for power and a rifle shaped nozzle—but somehow calling it a tommygun makes it more personal to me.

My squad started to step out and form up. I let them stretch and yawn and make their tired old jokes. At the far end I noted that two new men had replaced Miller and Chavez, killed at the tag end of the Afro-Asian war 300 years before. I made a note to see if either of the replacements had come in lately. They might throw some light of those 300 long years of apparent peace when we'd stood cold and dead in our stasis cubicles without a war to fight.

Those inexplicable 300 years faintly disturbed me. At least something disturbed me, for this muster day felt somehow different from the ones in the past. The time before there had been 75 years between wars, by far the longest period of peace since the founding of the stasis army, but the war we had come out to fight had been the roughest too. The armies of the Western Hemisphere had fought all of Afro-Asia for three bloody years. It was during the Afro-Asian thing that I got my third stripe and rocker and a squad of my own. Seventy-five years before that, as a corporal, I'd fought Brazuritina, the four country block of southern South America. And before that the intervals had been shorter yet, fifteen years, seven years, twenty years, ten years.

So something must have changed out there in the civilian

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world, or else they must have found another way to fight their wars. In the bright sun of this 300 year late muster day it would have been nice to know what had happened. But why should a soldier care? A war is a war. You die as dead from anyone's weapon and one war is pretty much like another.

That typical soldier's attitude, I suppose, was why they began to store us away between wars. Soldiers make lousie citizens in peacetime. And a good peace-time soldier is likely as not to make a lousie war-time one. So they perfected the system of stasis and we volunteered to wait out the between-war intervals in our steel and plastic cubicles, each man with name and service record on his cubicle door, waiting for the bands to begin to play.

My squad formed up rapidly, standing sharp in a ramrod straight row. I walked to one end and passed in front of them, making a casual sort of inspection.

"Good morning, Staff-Sergeant Oskowski," Filippi the rocket and missile man said. "Did you enjoy your beauty rest?"

"Yes thank you Private First-Class Filippi," I said. "I've slept ever so much better since I moved out of range of your snoring."

"Hullo, Sarge," Orozco said. He was the flame thrower, a broad-faced boy of Mexican descent, quiet and shy but efficient.

"Hello Orozco," I said. "How's your cigarette lighter?"

"Hey, Sarge," Corporal Ryan the demolition man said. "What's with the music?"

The funny thing was that I hadn't until Ryan mentioned it even noticed the music. For the P.A. system was serenading us with sounds of violins and muted horns, soft chamber orchestra music instead of the marches and war songs we customarily woke to.

"I don't know, Ryan," I said. "And that's not all I don't know. It's a strange muster day, that's for sure."

"What else?" Yamamoto our vehicle and engineering man said.

"I don't know who we're supposed to be fighting," I said. "All I know is what year it is."

They waited to hear. I walked down the rest of the line, past Johnson, the other tommyguner, and the two new men, Bill Chesnut, a Sioux Indian and the new squad sniper, and Charles LaBonte, a thin faced, black haired man, older than most recruits, assigned to us as a corpsman.

"It's 2516," I said finally. "You boys have had a nice 300 year nap."

I got the effect I was aiming for. They gasped, almost in unison. Then they started to buzz, guessing among themselves what was up, until I told them to knock it off. Around us other squads were forming up, and platoons, and

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companies, and battalions, and finally, if you could see it all as one unit, the entire Regimental Combat Team. Dust rose into the mid-morning air and orders were barked and men scratched and belched and shuffled into lines. The Lieutenant came over.

"Any news, sir?" I said.

"Nothing, Sergeant," he said. "Your squad all right?"

"All present and accounted for sir. Nobody skipped into town last night I guess."

We both chuckled at the hairy old joke about the soldier slipping out after stasis check and coming back a doddering old man the next morning. He would have been a hell of an old man this time, after 300 years.

The Lieutenant inspected my squad, then sent us off to the mess hall for breakfast. I double-timed the boys over, getting the kinks out, and we filed in and went through the line.

The cooks were civilians. A soldier's job, after all, is to fight. Not to cook or clean up or any of the other menial jobs they used to have soldiers do, but to stick to his trade. Civilians do those things.

Civilians—We don't dislike them and we don't love them. They're another kind of people. Peace lovers, family men, businessmen. Day-to-day people, who live life in any dull boring way that it comes. They aren't interested in excitement, in proving themselves under fire and learning the final truth that you can only learn in combat. They just want to live. In a way they're sane and we're crazy. But we are what we are.

So we fight their wars. After the war is over we have a big party and celebrate. And that time the civilians start being glad that we're going back into stasis soon. We're not particularly delicate about our pleasures. We take women where we find them and of course they're often somebody else's woman. We get drunk and we raise hell and then the civilians hate our guts and they're glad when we go back into deep-freeze. But a few minor indignities are worth the service we perform of fighting their wars for them.

By the next time they've forgotten how much they hated us, or else they are a whole new bunch of civilians. They're glad we're coming back out to fight their wars. They feed us a real good breakfast that first muster day morning out of deep-freeze.

This is as good a time as any to mention that of course it's not really deep freeze. It's a combination of temperature and electricity and intervenous drugs and radiation, all wrapped into one package. Which doesn't matter in the least. You stand in the cubicle and it feels like going to sleep very fast, and when you wake up, no matter how much later, it's like

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tomorrow. But in another way it's not like tomorrow. You're vaguely aware, in stasis, of the time going by. Not bored, not restless, just vaguely aware. The years roll by and the world changes around you. They keep you dusted and they keep all of the buildings in vacuum and the world changes around you. Then someone flips Colonel Moss' switch and we come out to fight their wars. To fight because it's our job and because that's the one thing that we all love, we slightly crazy soldiers who could never adjust to humdrum peacetime lives.

During that fine civilian-cooked breakfast, eggs and ham and flapjacks and preserves and juice and toasted muffins and coffee, I talked to the two new men.

From Bill Chesnut, the sniper, I could learn little. He'd come in to the outfit only a couple of years after we went back into stasis in 2198. He had a pretty typical story. He was a wild kid, always getting into trouble and when he was 19 he killed a man in a street fight. It wasn't particularly Chesnut's fault, or the other man's either for that matter, but he was tried and sentenced to 30 years in the penitentary. Then they offered to let him join the army instead. He jumped at the chance.

A lot of the men come in that way and in the army it's never held against them. The army, nowadays, is about the only remaining place for a man with a combatative nature.

Anyway, Chesnut enlisted and went through basic training, a year of being taught the tricks of the trade by veterans too old to be worth cold storage. Chesnut even liked training, which is no snap, better than he liked civilian life. That's the best sign of the making of a soldier and I knew that I had a man who would pull his weight.

Charles LaBonte, the new corpsman, was a different matter. His trouble was restlessness rather than wanting to fight, but it made him unfit for civilian life no less. Born in 2291 he'd found the world a dull place. Adventure was dead, the world was calm and uneventful. From the time that he got out of school until he was 30 he wandered around, trying to find a place where he fitted in. In 2322 he enlisted in the army, figuring it as the only place where there might be some excitement.

"It was a stainless steel world out there," he said. "Everything was worked out and nothing ever happened. No wars, no revolutions, no big changes. Ever since the Afro-Asian war the people kept anything interesting from happening."

"Sounds pretty bad," I said.

"It was. One year after another, everything the same. People just moved along on the same level, never sad, never happy, never excited."

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"Well, they must not be getting along so well now," I said. "If they were they wouldn't have called us out."

"That's right. Besides, it's been nearly 200 years since I came in. Lord, think of that! Two hundred years. Everybody I knew is dead. My family is long gone. I feel alone in the world."

"We're your family now," I said. I could remember when I felt the same way, after the first time in stasis, just a kid of 20 and suddenly 23 years younger than my old friends. Even so, my friends had at least still been alive. LaBonte's were dust by now.

The bugle blew assembly and we came out of the mess hall and walked back to the parade ground and formed up with the rest of Able Company. The regiment drew up in a long line, like on parade, facing a platform that had been set up near the center of the field. On the platform were Colonel Moss the C.O., a couple of Generals probably down from division or corps, two or three Light Colonels and four civilians dressed in limp grey and brown and pastel colored clothes that I took to be the current civilian style.

Colonel Moss introduced one of the civilians to us, a Mr. Karonopolis, the mayor of the nearby city of Linkhorn. From Colonel Moss' first words I detected a tension of some sort. He made the introduction in almost insultingly few words, biting off each syllable as if it were bitter flavored. Then he stepped back, very stiff and soldierly, and stood in a ramrod sort of parade rest.

Mr. Karonopolis took over the microphone.

"Make yourselves comfortable, gentlemen," he said. Nobody moved of course.

"On behalf of the local and federal government, the civil population, and of myself I wish to make you welcome to the year 2516," he said. "We of the 26th century feel that we know you men, even though you do not yet know us. In school we have studied your brave exploits of the past."

So he continued. It was all very kind and pleasant, but we had heard the same things, or variations of them, every time we had come out of stasis. He didn't say anything we didn't know until he began to describe the events since we went into cold-storage.

He told of a world of social, scientific and philosophic progress, of cultural and intellectual advances and internation accord. The world he described ran smooth. Nations were at peace with nations, individuals with other individuals. It was a world that had no need for an army, even a stasis one.

He was leading up all through the speech to what he said next, and yet the idea was so difficult to grasp that when he finally said it

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in plain words it was as though he had dropped a bomb on us.

He told us that we were to be decommissioned and returned to civilian status.

I think he expected us to cheer. He was a civilian and had no understanding of soldiers' minds.

A murmuring grew in the ranks, and I was a part of the murmuring, arguing to myself the impossibility of returning to a civilian world, a strange and incomprehensible civilian world 300 years more advanced than the last one I had seen, returning from war and excitement and the only trade I knew or wanted to know to a humdrum civilian world made of foam rubber and stainless steel.

The Colonel stood on the platform in the blazing sun, his face a mask. The music tried to sooth us, soft and calm. And the murmuring grew louder.

A soldier stood out of the ranks in the next company, a tommygunner like myself, waving his weapon in the air. "Like hell!" he shouted. "Like hell I'll become a civilian. What do you think I am? You're crazy!"

His Sergeant ordered the tommygunner back into ranks but the order lacked the conviction that any order needs. So the man stood and shouted at the civilian and the murmur grew, like angry bees.

"Who do you think you're talking to?" a voice shouted.

"Damn fool civilian," another roared.

"You can't do away with war," my Lieutenant said, half to himself. "There'll always be wars. It's human nature."

On the platform the civilians registered first surprise and then dismay. In their lifetimes none of them had ever met a soldier. How could they be expected to understand them? And probably they had never heard any of the soldierly language that was pouring at them now.

They put their heads together in a conference and then Mr. Karonopolis stepped over to the Colonel and spoke to him. The Old Man stood at his rigid parade rest and only shook his head negative. The Mayor spoke again, more strongly it seemed to me. This time the Colonel ignored him entirely.

They tried whatever they had tried on Colonel Moss on the two Generals from higher headquarters but got no better response. Then another of the civilians stepped to the microphone.

"Gentlemen, please," he said. "There is no value in this. What is the good of an army without wars? Surely you don't want to remain in stasis forever, waiting for a war that will never come?"

The murmur grew to a roar.

"We don't intend to thrust you naked into a hostile world," he said. "You will be retrained into

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any field you want. Or you can simply live, not work at all. You can have homes and wives and cars. You can enjoy life now, you've earned enjoyment."

Then his voice was blotted out by the angry buzzing of the men. Even the men of my own squad were shouting. "We're soldiers, we don't want to be anything else," Ryan yelled. "You can't abolish wars," Filippi screamed. "Go to hell!" "Shut up you bastard!"

And standing there at attention I tried to picture myself as a civilian, living out the rest of my life, 40 or 50 years probably, for I was only 28, living a humdrum day-to-day existence with no excitement or danger but only the routine of a civilian's soft life.

And yet the civilians were right. What use was there for an army if there were to be no more wars? Could they really have abolished wars?

The civilians on the platform huddled together in conference again and then the Mayor approached the Colonel and this time the Colonel nodded his head to whatever the Mayor said.

I will say this for the civilians —they were facing soldiers for the first time in their lives and they were obviously surprised by the reaction they'd gotten but through all of the shouting and swearing they had shown no sign of fear. Perhaps it was the bravery of men facing something that they don't know is dangerous. In any case, after the Colonel had agreed to whatever they had asked they left the platform and climbed into a ground car, a smooth skinned bug without any wheels or visible motor and drove away.

The Colonel approached the microphone and the rear dropped to complete silence in a second and we could hear the soothing music again.

"Fall the troops into the barracks," the Colonel said. "Set up for garrison duty."

So we marched across the parade grounds to the barracks, 5000 strong. Somewhere up the line someone started cadence count and the entire Regiment joined in, 5000 bass voices drowning out the music of the P.A. system. And somehow it did not sound like the last time we would march.

The barracks were just as we had left them, not even dusty after 300 years in a vacuum. I had the men break out their barracks bags and set up their gear. By the time that was done the word came down to choose three men for overnight pass. I let Filippi and Ryan and Orozco go, while the rest of us settled down to spend the afternoon at poker and talk.

After a while Johnson and Chestnut and I went over to the P.X., which the civilians had opened, and joined the beer drinkers in the slop chute. The main

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topic of conversation, naturally, centered around what the civilians had said and what was going to happen.

"They're nuts if they think they've done away with wars," Sergeant Mangini from Charlie Company said. "Wars are human nature. You can't change that."

"They say there haven't been any in 300 years," I reminded him.

"So what? There've been other times when there weren't any wars for a long time. But they always ended. They'll need us again."

"Maybe we'll have to start our own war," Sergeant Olivier from H.Q. Company said. "If these civilians have gotten so soft, maybe we'll have to wake them up a little. For the good of the species, you know?"

"You're darn right," Chesnut said. "We'll just have to start our own war."

"You're getting pretty salty for a guy just out of Basic," I said.

"Look Sarge, if they send us back to civilian life you know where I'll be? In prison. They'll make me serve out my sentence."

"We'll all be in prison soon enough," Mangini said. "We're not suited for civilian life, not one of us. We'll be too wild and violent for them, and they'll end by putting us all behind bars."

"They said they'd re-educate us," I defended.

"They can't re-educate us any more than they can teach civilians how to be soldiers," Mangini said. "A man's born a soldier, he dies a soldier. He just can't be taught to live like a civilian."

After a while I drifted back to the barracks. I found orders from the Captain saying that Tuesday (I have no idea what day it actually was—we always call muster day Monday) we were to start regular training schedule.

After supper I came back to the barracks and lay on my bunk trying to think the thing through. All over the barracks the men were talking about the demobilization, and soon they had something new to talk about. Long before any self-respecting soldier would have come in off of an overnight pass the men who had been in town started drifting in. Everyone started talking about what they'd seen that had driven them back so early.

At ten Filippi and Orozco came into the barracks.

"C'mere, Filippi," I said.

He ambled over and sat on the side of my bunk.

"It's a hell of a world out there Sergeant," he said.

"Let's hear about it," I said.

"It's not that it looks so very different. Their cars and choppers and airplanes are about the same, a little smoother and quieter but you can still tell which is which. Mostly the whole thing is just quieter. And the city seems smaller. More parks, more trees, every-

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thing moving slow and easy like in a small town."

"What about the people?"

"They've changed. They're relaxed and easygoing. They don't seem to ever hurry and they don't have a care in the world. Everyone just walks around talking and taking it easy. And you can't get them mad or start a fight to save yourself."

"You tried to start a fight?"

"Sure. All of us tried. But no one could get the civilians riled up. Say something to them and they'd smile and pat you on the back and talk about it like it was a specimen under a microscope. And if a soldier just walked up and took a swing, a couple of civilians would hold him and talk to him until he didn't want to fight any more."

"Maybe they're just a bunch of cowards. That doesn't prove anything."

"Well, the women are different too, Sarge. That ought to prove something. You try to pick one up and she doesn't get mad or scared. She just smiles and says she'd rather not. Or if she's willing it's nothing like you expect. If she feels like making love she does it and then says thank you and just goes away. No trauma, no love, no crying and wailing about virtue."

Filippi went off to tell the rest of the men about what he'd seen in Linkhorn and I lay on my sack and thought about what he'd said. I'd been brought up to believe that people don't change, but if what Filippi had said was true it looked like maybe I was taught wrong. I made up my mind to take a pass into town Tuesday night and see for myself.

The next morning we woke to the same soothing music, but we breakfasted and started training, trying to drown out the music with our shouts. We marched and practiced squad tactics and ran the infiltration and obstacle courses and fired our weapons. About three in the afternoon we knocked off and another three men from each squad were allowed to go on pass. I put on my Class A summer uniform, still well pressed and dapper from 300 years earlier, and took the bus into Linkhorn.

As Filippi had said, the city seemed to have shrunk. Not in area exactly, and perhaps not even in population, but the buildings were less tall and there were more trees and grass and parks. The machines were less noticeable. Not that there weren't any, but you just didn't notice them. The cars were sleek and mild colored, moving smoothly along without wheels or motor sounds, the copters rose on silent rotors, everything seemed muted. The moving sidewalks, the pride of Linkhorn the last time I'd been there, were gone and the citizens seemed to actually enjoy

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walking, strolling arm in arm talking and laughing together. The town was so peaceful that it made me nervous.

Of course I had to try to start a fight. I walked into a civilian going full tilt and knocked him to the pavement.

"Why the hell don't you watch where you're going?" I said.

He picked himself up and dusted himself off. "Come now," he said, "We're both aware that you ran into me on purpose."

"You want to make something of it?"

"On the contrary. But tell me, you're a Sergeant, aren't you? I'm rather unfamiliar with the rating system. I haven't had a chance to talk to one of you men yet."

"I'm a Staff-Sergeant."

"How interesting. That's a position of some authority, isn't it?"

"Yeh, I command a squad."

"A squad? Oh yes, the basic small unit of a military force."

"That's right, eight men."

"That must be challenging. Tell me, how much of the decision making function do you exercise in the field?"

I was starting to answer when I caught on to what he was trying to do, but he seemed so sincerely interested in me that it was hard not to go along with him. "Quit trying to change the subject," I said.

"Why certainly, if you wish. But I really am interested."

"I think I'll knock your teeth down your throat."

"I hope you won't," he said. "And after all, it wouldn't prove much. I quite agree that you're a better fighter than I am."

"What'dya mean by that?" I said. I kept looking for fear in his face, or anger even, but there was none. He spoke slowly and evenly and seemed really more interested in what I was saying than in saving his skin.

"I'm a fairly decent athlete," he said, "But quite untrained as a fighter."

"You're a coward," I said.

"I suppose that in your frame of reference I do seem a coward. I don't want to fight and I won't be angered. But from my standpoint, Sergeant, I'm not a coward at all. I'm simply not disturbed by what you've said. I know myself too well, my faults, my weaknesses, my strengths, and your accusations haven't added any new perceptions about myself. And if they had I would be more likely to thank you than fight you."

I wasn't getting anywhere and my heart wasn't in it any more anyway. Somehow, although he wasn't more than a few years older than me, he managed to remind me of my father, or of how my father should have been. I moved on. I had to try a girl to satisfy myself about what Filippi had said about them.

It was twilight by then and I

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was walking through one of the rolling green parks that dotted the city. The girl was small and slim with long brown hair worn straight down her back, her face young and pert.

"Hi-ya, babe, let's you and me go off somewhere and make it," I said.

She laughed a tinkling sort of laugh and said "My name is Jodi."

"I'm Kenny Oskowski," I said. "Want to try a real man for a change?"

"I would like to know you better, if that's what you mean."

"Sure, babe. Let's find a hotel and get acquainted."

"I'd rather go for a walk. It's an awfully nice evening. Wouldn't you just as soon go for a walk?"

"Okay, we'll walk," I said. "I'm in no hurry."

We walked. We had a milkshake together. (Me—a milkshake! But somehow I didn't need whiskey with her, though she wouldn't have minded if I'd wanted one.) We went bowling and walked some more and ended by sitting on a bench holding hands and listening to a band concert in the park.

At 10:30 I walked her home and she was like my little sister instead of the pickup I'd tried for. I walked her to her door, feeling warm and kind and hoping for a single chaste good-night kiss.

"Would you like to stay all night with me, Kenny?" she said.

"I didn't think you were that kind of girl, Jodi," I said.

"What kind of girl? I like you. I enjoy your company."

"But what about love?"

"I suppose that is love. Love isn't something you can pin down."

"Do you want to get married?"

"No, why? I like you now, or maybe love you, but that doesn't necessarily have anything to do with living with you for the rest of my life."

So in the end we made love and I stayed with her all night, but gently and pleasantly, for its own sake and for our own. And in the morning I went back to the army, feeling as I had never felt before after an overnight pass, happy and at peace with the world, without a hangover or a sense of guilt or any bawdy stories to tell the troops.

And at Fort Morris I found the soldiers still talking war. Demanding that a war be made for them or that Colonel Moss lead them against the civilians.

We trained all that day, more firing range, more squad tactics, more physical conditioning. In the afternoon all of the men who had not had their passes yet were given them and sent into Linkhorn.

They came straggling back bitter and angry and frustrated, most of them before ten o'clock, having been unable to start any fights or cause any trouble. In the barracks they joined in little groups to talk

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of what they had seen and what they wanted to do to the civilians.

"Man, they're dull," Sergeant Olivier said. "Nicest thing we can do for them is to shoot them up a little and wake them up."

"You can't even start a fist fight with one of them," I said. "How the hell do you expect to start a war?"

"Close up we have to talk to them," he said. "You don't have to talk to start a war. You just go in shooting."

"But why do you want to start a war? What have they done to you?"

"When did you start being a peace lover?" Olivier said.

"Maybe last night. It seems a pretty happy world out there. Why should we destroy it?"

"Because it's our job. You think a society like that one can last? Hell no. They'll fall apart from sheer inertia."

"I doubt it. But anyway, why should you care?"

"I'm a soldier."

"Not any more. You're going to be a civilian now, Sergeant Olivier."

"You think I could stand to live like that? Day after day without any excitement? I'm a soldier and I've got to fight."

"There aren't any more wars."

"There will be. If not now, eventually. Without us this fool country will be defenseless. It's our duty to wake them up."

Olivier spoke for all of them. Their faith in the future of wars was unshakeable. War could no more be outgrown than sex.

"I see it this way," Filippi said. "Colonel Moss will get fed up with waiting and move us against the city. After the city, the state. We'll join up with the rest of the army and get this world back into the old groove."

I quit arguing with them. I suddenly saw that I was the only one who didn't think that it was our duty to destroy the society outside. And as Olivier and Filippi and the others talked of their plans for starting a war I realized that I was going to be fighting against them if they did. I retreated to my bunk to think.

Down the room I saw LaBonte, the new corpsman, doing the same. After a while I got up and walked down and sat on his bunk.

"What do you think?" I said.

"Think about what, Sarge? I was just resting."

"No, LaBonte, you were thinking. You're not a soldier like those guys. You came in for excitement, not blood. You're thinking the same as I am."

"How's that, Sarge? How are you thinking?"

I looked around the room carefully. Speaking my mind was dangerous in a barracks full of soldiers looking for a fight. But no one was near and I felt pretty sure of LaBonte.

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"I'm thinking that if these guys move on the civilians I'll have to be on the civilian side," I said.

"You're crazy," he said.

"I don't know if I could stand living like they do, but this society looks pretty sane and honest to me. I think they really have outgrown war. I'm going in to town tonight and warn the civilians. And if worse come to worse I'm going to help them defend themselves."

"That's treason," LaBonte said. "Don't talk treason to me."

"I thought you might want to come along."

"All right, maybe I do feel like you do, Sarge. But if we went in there and the army started a war, they'd gun us down on sight as traitors."

"You're probably right. But I'm going anyway. I've got to try to help."

"Not me."

"I'm going tonight. Are you going to report me?"

"No. I won't do that. Not until tomorrow at least."

"All right. But if you tell, I'll kill you for it."

"I won't tell."

I walked back to my bunk and lay there working over my plan and thinking and waiting for lights out. Across the room the buzz of war talk continued. Taps blew at 11 and the men began to sack out and slowly the talk died and the barracks became still. I lay and waited and stared at the ceiling until two, waiting for the last whisper to die out and the last man to fall asleep. Then I got up and dressed silently. I took my tommygun and Filippi's rocket launcher and some of Ryan's demolition equipment, fuses and explosives, and tiptoed out of the barracks, watching LaBonte as I passed to see if he would make an alarm. But he lay still.

There were two guards on duty at the gate, lazing around with cigarettes hanging out of their mouths.

"Where'ya heading with all that stuff, Sarge?" one of them asked. I recognized him as Don Carpenter from Charlie Company, a balding overaged corporal, back down to private for about the tenth time since the last war.

"Going into town to stir up a little excitement, Carp," I said.

"Going to get the jump on the rest of the boys, huh?"

"That's right. Start a little war of my own before the real one."

"Aw, Sarge, you know there ain't going to be any more wars. The civilians told us so."

"That's right. I forgot."

"I ought to check your pass, Sarge. And I ought to make you leave that hardware here."

"You ought to, but you won't."

"Nope. It's too quiet for me. If you can stir up some action, I'm for it."

So I passed out through the

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gate and marched down the road under the cool midnight sky, staggering under the tools of war.

I was almost to the center of Linkhorn before I saw anyone. Then it was what looked like policemen, two of them in a city car, but they carried no weapons that I could see and they didn't talk like cops.

"Hello, soldier," one of them said. "Nice night."

"Take me to whoever runs this town, will you?" I said.

"We'll be happy to. But what's the rush, Sergeant? Let us buy you a cup of coffee or a drink. We'd like to hear about the army."

"Look," I said, "this is pretty urgent."

"I'm sure it is," the cop said. "You wouldn't be walking into the city this late at night with all that equipment unless you had a pretty important reason. Why not tell me about it? Perhaps I can help you."

"Turn off the psychology," I said. "I'm on your side, you don't have to sooth me down. I came to warn you that the army is likely to attack you. I want to help you defend yourself."

"Why that's certainly kind of you, but I wouldn't imagine that the army will do anything this late at night. Come on and have a drink and rest."

I turned my tommygun toward him. "Goddamn it," I said, "Take me to whoever runs this place and quit psychoanalyzing me or I'll start the war right here and now."

"He just sat there and grinned at me, cool and brave and yet friendly. After a minute I lowered the tommygun and grinned back.

"You were taking a hell of a chance," I said.

"I don't think so. You came in to help us. If you'd come looking for a fight I would have reacted differently."

"Have it your own way. But remember that I do want to help. And that army isn't going to sit out there forever, waiting for a war."

I climbed in the patrol car and they drove me to an all-night restaurant. We sat for a while shooting the breeze. Once again, like the man I'd talked to, they seemed genuinely interested in me personally. After an hour they drove me to a hotel and got me a complimentary room. No one made any attempt to relieve me of my weapons and before the cop left he promised that a city official would be by to talk to me in the morning.

I didn't even try to sleep. I lay on the hotel bed and thought about what I'd done and what was likely to follow until the horizon showed rose and pink and the sky got blue and things began to move in the city around me.

The sun was well up before the city official called for me. He in-

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troduced himself as Stephen French, a short man in his middle forties, well built, grey at the temples and mild mannered. The city council, he told me, was sitting in session, considering the army situation. He would conduct me to them so that I could tell them what I knew. In a few words he made me feel very important.

We stopped downstairs for breakfast in the hotel dining room and over bacon and eggs Mr. French told me what he knew of the situation.

The army was not fully unfrozen all over the country. About a third of the units had been taken out of stasis to be decommissioned. The civilians had wanted to do it slowly in order to prevent the sudden influx of men from unbalancing society.

The plan to decommission the army had been brewing for some years but they had waited to make sure that war was actually no longer a threat. That the soldiers would not want to become civilians (and all over the country it was the same) had been something they hadn't foreseen. A gap in their logic Mr. French admitted with a wry smile. So now, all over the country they were faced with angry rebellious soldiers.

"What sort of weapons do you have, sir?" I asked.

"None. We gave up using weapons years ago. Even the police don't use weapons any more. But then we haven't a crime problem any more. About all the police do is help cats out of trees and look for stray children."

"You must have some sort of weapons. Or at least machines to make them."

"Yes, probably we could produce them. But even with weapons, we're not soldiers. We couldn't stand up against the army."

"Couldn't you produce one big bomb and wipe them out?"

He gave me a strange look. "No, I don't think we'll do that. That isn't our way."

"You won't have any way if you don't. They'll wipe you out. What about a defensive weapon? Something to stop tanks from running and guns from shooting?"

"Yes, I believe we could produce something like that. But it wouldn't solve anything. Your soldiers could wipe us out in hand to hand combat."

I gave up on the weapon angle. "Society has certainly changed since the last war," I said. "What happened?"

What he told me was too complicated to put down here. Basically, after the West had defeated the Afro-Asians, the Easterners had turned away from machinery and returned to an emphasis on meditation, the mind and philosophy. And, then, from the defeated, these things had swept the world, creating a

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worldwide society that used machines but was not very concerned with them. The important things became thought, self analysis and meditation, integrated with the Western behavioral sciences.

The change had grown from within rather than by law. Finally the time had come when everyone was concerned with improving himself, with dominating his own ego and seeking individual perfection rather than dominating others. Everyone could look back on a happy childhood, where formerly bad childhoods had always bred the dangerous people. Competition for gain and power died away and what remained was competition for the pleasure of measuring yourself against others, rather than to feed your ego.

Emotions were as highly respected as the intellect as long as they did not hurt others. People grew beyond the need for constant external entertainment. They found their pleasures in learning and creating. Of course psychology and the other behavioural sciences advanced tremendously. What the soldiers had run into when they tried to pick fights were competent lay-psychoanalysts.

"But that won't save you from the army," I told Mr. French. "You can't talk to an army."

"We realize that now," he said. "We aren't underestimating the danger of the situation we've gotten ourselves into."

We came to the city hall, a modest stone and glass building set in the center of a park, and Mr. French led me in. It was all very casual. He took me to a man sitting at a desk by a tall set of doors and said: "I've brought the soldier who came in from the Fort last night."

"Take him right in," the man at the desk said. There were no guards or messengers or feverish conferences, and I was still carrying my weapons when we walked through the doors and found ourselves in the council chambers, a wide room with lots of windows and a large round table in the middle around which sat a group of simply dressed men and women.

"Welcome," the man at the head of the table said. I recognized him as Mr. Karonopolis, the Mayor. "We appreciate your having come to help us."

"I want to do anything I can," I said.

"Please sit down," he said. "We would like to ask a few questions."

I sat. Mr. Karonopolis introduced me to the other members of the council and then they began to question me.

"What do you think are the feelings of most of the soldiers?"

"They're angry," I said. "They want to remain soldiers, to fight. They're afraid that you'll force them to be civilians."

"But why is it that they don't want to become civilians?"

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"It's just not their life. They're soldiers. They look down on civilian life as dull and boring and insignificant."

"But you feel differently?"

"No, not really. I just don't think the army has a right to destroy this society. I don't want to live in it, but it seems too good to destroy."

"Would the other soldiers be willing to destroy it?"

"Yes sir, I think so."

A murmur ran through the chamber. "How do their officers feel?"

"I don't really know, but I think they pretty much agree."

"Do you think they will decide to attack?"

"That's up to Colonel Moss. The Regiment moves when the Colonel tells it to. Until he decides they'll just stew."

"And if the Colonel decides not to move?"

"They'll do only what he tells them. They're soldiers."

They lost interest in me after that and began to talk among themselves.

"May I say something?" I said.

"Certainly, Sergeant Oskowski," the Mayor said.

"Don't you want me to tell you about troop disposition and firepower and that sort of thing?"

"No, I don't think that would help us much," the Mayor said.

"I'm glad you don't, of course. I wouldn't like to have to tell you. I'd feel even more like a traitor. But it seems to me that you aren't taking the right line of defense. All you're interested in is how the soldiers feel. And I can tell you that they feel like starting a war.

"You've got to figure out a defense. I brought in a few weapons. You should be able to improvise more. But you'll be facing 5000 trained soldiers with every kind of modern weapon. You'll never beat them in the open.

"The way I see it the best thing is to attack them before they attack you. Send out a few carloads of booze and let them get themselves drunk, then go out there in the middle of the night with knives and clubs, picking up their weapons as you kill them.

"I don't know if it will work, but it's the only way to save your society. I can teach you how to use their weapons and tell you how the camp is laid out. I feel like a traitor but I'll do it anyway. Because if you don't attack first, your society is finished."

I stood there, after my speech, waiting for applause I suppose. The council members smiled at me, softly and sadly, and finally Mayor Karonopolis said: "Thank you very much for your expression of loyalty, Sergeant Oskowski. But I am afraid that we can't do any of the things you suggest. You say that we have to defend our society or they will destroy it. But you see, if we do what you

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suggest, we will have destroyed it ourselves."

I sat down, feeling at the same time like a complete fool and the only sane man in the room. The discussion moved back and forth, mostly concerning itself with whether and how soon the Regiment would attack. Occasionally one of the councilmen would ask me a question, but mostly they spoke to each other. like scientists rather than politicians, illustrating their points with case histories from other societies dating back to before the Greeks.

Finally it was decided to send another delegation, to see the Colonel alone this time and feel out his attitude.

Mr. French, the man who had brought me to the council, told me that I was free to do as I wished, but that he would be happy to show me around the city if I wanted. I accepted his offer and he got a car out of the pool.

He showed me manufacturing plants and colleges and private homes and museums, and yet somehow the tour was less interesting than I had expected. Most of the changes since last I'd seen the city had been inside of the people. The machines were there of course, doing all of the arduous work, and the new buildings and new products. But the people considered them only necessary, not important. The buildings, in fact the entire style of archecture, was designed to emphasize people rather than the buildings themselves.

Passing an athletic field Mr. French and I started talking about track records and I got a shock. I'd looked upon the civilians as relatively soft and weak, misjudging their pacifism as weakness. But I discovered that the current record for the mile was 2 minutes, 3.8 seconds, and the hundred yard dash was run in 6 seconds flat. Schoolboys polevaulted over 16 feet. They had given up distance javelin throwing when the throws had become so long that the wind was more of a factor than the thrower. Now they threw flat, at targets 250 feet away, almost as far as the record distance when I was young. And nearly everyone participated in one sport or another. Mr. French said that they attributed the fantastic records to control of the mind, for the people weren't any larger or heavier muscled than before. But excellent physical condition was the rule rather than the exception, and the people in general were actually in better shape than my fellow soldiers.

As for the colleges, they no longer issued degrees. People studied for knowledge and took courses on and off during their lives. Classes had become lecture series and the newspapers printed lists of which lecture series were starting and who was speaking.

Late in the afternoon Mr.

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French got word by his pocket radio that the delegation to Fort Morris had returned so we went back to the city hall to hear the news.

Mr. Kolar, the man who had headed the delegation, analyzed the Colonel as feeling himself caught in a dilemma.

"He is trained to accept civilian control," Mr. Kolar said, "To do what the civilian authorities tell him. But we have told him to become a civilian himself, and that is a command that falls outside of his frame of reference."

"How do you think he will decide?" Mayor Karonopolis said.

"Right now he's wavering between waiting to see what will happen and launching an immediate attack. He instinctively feels that we are wrong, that our society is deluding itself in thinking that there will be no more wars."

"Pardon me, Mr. Kolar," I said, "But perhaps if I returned to the Fort I could convince the troops about your society."

"No," he said, "They know what you've done and they think of you as a traitor. You would only start bloodshed, perhaps even tip them into action."

"It seems," the Mayor said, "That we shall have to solve the Colonel's dilemma for him. Mr. Fitzgerald, the proposed plan was yours. Do you feel prepared to try to impliment it?"

"But do we have the right to manipulate them?" a Councilwoman asked.

"Perhaps we don't," the Mayor said, "But in the long run it seems the only way to protect themselves. And after all, the soldiers have the avowed purpose of protecting society. Mr. Fitzgerald, what do you say?"

A tall, bony faced man with horn rimmed glasses stood up at the end of the table. "Yes, Mr. Mayor," he said, "I'll be happy to try."

The tall man chose two others to accompany him and they left the room.

"You might as well stay here," the mayor said. "Mr. Fitzgerald has a portable radio transmitter in his coat and we'll be able to listen."

We made ourselves comfortable and waited for the technicians monitoring Fitzgerald's transmission to cut him in to the wall loudspeaker.

"You'll have to make a decision yourself if our plan succeeds," the Mayor said. "You must decide whether your loyalty is to the Fort or to us."

"I don't see that there's much choice. I can't go back."

"Still, this will mean for the rest of your life. Perhaps we could arrange it so that you could return to the Fort with honor."

"No sir, I'm afraid that I've already made my choice. I think I'll just have to learn to live here and like it."

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"It won't be easy. It's a pleasant society for us, but we all grew up in it. You will miss the excitement and conflict. I doubt if you can ever entirely adjust to our mild way of life."

"I'll just have to try sir. But you seem pretty sure that you can solve the problem of the army. Can you be that sure? What's your plan?"

"It's a psychological one, and you'll hear it soon enough. Of course there's always an area of doubt. We must wait and see, and hope."

We sat and sipped coffee and waited, the minutes dragging slowly by, until the loudspeaker on the wall crackled into life. It broke into the middle of a conversation between Colonel Moss and Councilman Fitzgerald.

"Colonel, we can't thank you enough for saving us from the plot," Mr. Fitzgerald was saying.

"Long experience has shown that war is human nature," the Colonel said.

"Yet the traitors had us convinced."

"They would have disbanded the army, waited a few years, and then struck when you least expected it."

"We see that now, sir."

"The army stands ready to march, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"The time isn't right yet sir. Our enemies are not prepared to attack. It will be three years at the minimum and we don't believe in attacking first."

"Yes, that is the weakness of Democracy. But a noble weakness."

"I suppose that it's best for you to spend those years in training?"

"No, no," the Colonel said. "Three years of garrison duty would soften the men."

"Then what do you propose?"

"We shall return to stasis. You must keep a careful watch and alert us just before hostilities commence. We can be ready to march in an hour if necessary, but a few days or a week's notice is best."

Councilman Fitzgerald and the Colonel talked for a few minutes more, completing plans for the imaginary future war against the traitors, and then the Councilman took his leave and the radio crackled into silence.

"I suppose that it's unfair to us," the Mayor said next to me.

"You knew that they would choose to return to cold storage, didn't you?"

"Yes, Sergeant. Fitzgerald's plan was predicated on their dislike of garrison duty and their faith in war as a part of human nature. It wasn't too difficult to predict with our knowledge of psychology. Actually, Colonel Moss symbolically repeated the original decision of the army to go into stasis. Do you think that we've done wrong by your comrades?"

"No sir. I think you've done the best you could."

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"We can try waking them one at a time in the future," he said.

"Yes sir. But they still won't choose civilian life."

And so the next day I rode a helicopter out and watched the Regiment muster on the parade grounds and march back to their cubicles. It was too far to see who was marching my squad. Corporal Ryan I suppose. They marched back and disbanded, not into civilian life but into perpetual stasis.

Of myself during the years since then there isn't much to tell. I wandered around the country. I studied a little at a couple of colleges and tried to find a place and an interest for myself. But there wasn't any, for I was still a soldier. I was restless and lonely and not very adjustable, an old soldier at 30 without a war to fight.

That's why I came back here to Fort Morris and took over maintaining the Fort. Not that a man is needed, for the machines do the work, but it seems more personal for me to care for my old comrades in arms. I check the vacuums of the barracks and ordinance buildings and other buildings and I see to it that the cubicles of my former comrades are dusted and clean, as though they might want to look out of their plastic and steel cubicles.

And sometimes I stop to look into the cubicle marked *Staff-Sergeant Kenneth Oskowski, Squad Leader, 2nd Platoon, Able Company, 3rd Batallion, 45th Regimental Combat Team.*

The vacant cubicle.

In this issue . . . Coming next month . . .

A note just received from Doctor Isaac Asimov: "I've done it again and the letters from the Gentle Readers are Gently flowing. Would you please stick a note in the next issue as follows. In "The Imaginary That Isn't" (F&SF, March 1961) I end with a casual statement that 200 yards northeast is equivalent to $200 + 200i$ yards. In so doing I casually repealed the Pythagorean Theorem, and, if you don't mind, I would like to reinstate it. What 200 miles northeast is equivalent to is about $141\frac{1}{2} + 141\frac{1}{2}i$ yards, or $100\sqrt{2} + 100\sqrt{2}\,i$ yards, if you want it more exactly. . . . Well, at least it shows that the readers *read* me, and that's something, isn't it?"

Last year, Kingsley Amis took a long look at science fiction in his book NEW MAPS OF HELL; next month, we bring you fresh from England an Amis science fiction story, called "Something Strange." There will also be a novelet by Cordwainer Smith, and other good things.

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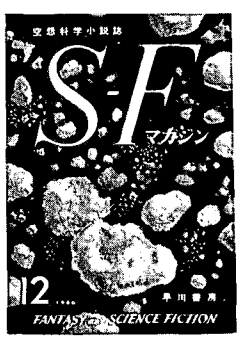

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